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ST. MARGARET'S CAVE:

OR,

THE NUN'S STORY.

An Ancient Legend.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ELIZABETH HELME,

AUTHOR OF ALBERT, FARMER OF INGLEWOOD
FOREST, LOUISA, &c. &c.

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ST. MARGARET'S CAVE:

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THE NUN'S STORY.



CHAP. I.

SOON after De Launcy had left Margaret, Jaques came to bring her supper, which, while he was placing on the table, Alice said, "Have you not some minstrel in the castle? I have heard the distant sound of music for these few days past."

Jaques answered in the affirmative, adding, "that the musician was an Ethiopian, and an idiot, notwithstanding his skill."

"Strange," said Margaret, 'after

Jaques left them, “that a creature, who can have sufficient knowledge to produce sounds, that call forth every sensation of the heart, can be an idiot.”

In earnest converse, seated at their lonely table, they remained till the night was far advanced, and all was still in the castle, when suddenly they heard in a low voice, some one singing under their window.

“What should this mean?” said Margaret, starting up, and throwing open the casement: but the night was too dark for her to distinguish objects, save only that it was a man, whom, by the singing, she judged to be the minstrel; but why, at that strange hour, he should seek her apartment, was passing either her comprehension or that of Alice.—“Poor creature!” said Margaret.

garet. "You recollect, dame, that Jaques said he was an idiot; and, perhaps, he knows not where he is wandering."——Further observations, however, were prevented, by the person who caused them, continuing his song, though still in a low voice, yet scarcely less melodious than the minstrel's pipe.

I sing of captive maids and beauty's tears,
Of orphans wrongs, and guilty tyrants fears,
Of cruel caitiff knights, and damsels fair;
But this one burden, still my song doth bear,
"Let Virtue smile, for Providence will send,
To Guilt a scourge—To Innocence a friend."

The surprise of both Alice and Margaret was too great to be immediately expressed in words——They gazed on each other with astonishment. "This cannot be the minstrel," said Alice, "or *he* is no idiot——"



“An idiot!” repeated Margaret, “my heart rises with anger at the bare supposition—Methinks, dame, the voice sounded like father Austin’s, as I have heard him sing the hymn of *Misericordia* in the old chapel.”

“Him, it cannot be,” replied Alice: “but be who it may, it affords comfort; for ’tis surely a friend, who takes this means to inform us, that we are not forgotten.”

Again they looked out, but the singer was gone. “Doubtless,” continued Alice, “a fear of discovery makes him hasten away; if we hear him again, I will speak to him.”

The strangeness of the circumstance banished sleep from both Alice and Margaret. Their minds were, however, relieved; for they could not but conjecture,

jecture, that the messenger of comfort came from Austin.

The ensuing day, as Jaques was preparing to attend with Margaret's dinner, he suddenly recollected, that firewood was wanting in her apartment, and asked Cuthbert to assist him in carrying the bundle, which was too heavy for him alone. Compliance was not, in general, among Cuthbert's qualifications; but on this request, snatching up the heavy faggot, he bid him lead the way. On reaching Margaret's chamber, Jaques entered first, and apologized for the intrusion of Cuthbert, saying that, unused to carry burdens, he had employed the minstrel to bear the wood for him.

"I thank you, Jaques," answered

Margaret, "I wished to see a man of his complexion."

"I am glad then to have acted according to your wishes, lady," replied Jaques; "but he is a poor creature, as your wisdom will soon discover."

At that moment Cuthbert entered. He threw his load on the hearth, and fixing his large black eyes first on Margaret, then on Alice, stood motionless.

"You play on the pipe, I hear?" said Alice, addressing him—"Can you sing as well as play?"

"Yes—yes," answered Cuthbert, "I sing with the owl.—Ah, ah," continued he, observing Margaret was caressing the dove given her by father Austin, "you have a pretty bird there; if you put it in a cage, I will set it free."

Jaques

Jaques placed the dinner, while Cuthbert mended the fire. The courtly lackey then making his obeisance, ordered Cuthbert to do the same. The minstrel obeyed, saying, as he left the chamber, "Remember what I have said, I will set the bird free, let it cost what it will."

"Strange," said the dame, as they shut the door, "what all this means, I cannot tell; but surely this minstrel is no idiot: vacancy of countenance, and imbecility of action, are ever the marks of idiotism—This youth, notwithstanding his complexion, possesses none of these. His features are intelligent, his person uncommonly well formed, and his manner, to me, appears rather affected than natural—Observed you, that he said, he sung with the owl, and that

he said he would set the bird free? His words, I deem, had an import, which he could not express before Jaques, and I have now no doubt it was him who sung under our window."

"I should be of your opinion," replied Margaret; but we have no friend but Austin, and from him such a messenger could not come."



Notwithstanding the hopes raised by the foregoing circumstance, Margaret's persecutions appeared to increase. Lord De Launcy introduced to her the young man he designed for her husband. His name was Stratford, a creature of his master's power, and accustomed to transact whatever he would command.

Margaret

Margaret received him with contempt. She did not even deign to listen to him, but shutting herself up with the dame in her inner chamber, left him to himself.

Lady De Launcy vowed vengeance ; her son-in-law secretly exulted ; but the lord De Launcy swore he was not to be foiled by a girl, and resolved to conquer, if not with her consent, by violence.

Richard De Launcy, at this juncture, was an unwelcome inmate, and in consequence, his father determined to remove him. The baron's stay in Northumberland had been prolonged beyond what was at first intended, and he easily framed an excuse, to send Richard to make his apologies to the King. Hopeless, from Margaret's conduct to-

wards,

B. 5

wards him, and unable to form any reason for his stay, he was necessitated to consent, though under a permission to return, as speedily as he could procure the King's leave of absence.

CHAP. II.

ON the evening previous to Richard's departure, a sumptuous entertainment was provided, and all the nobles, within many miles, were invited; the castle resounded with mirth, and the domestics, in imitation of their superiors, glutted themselves with wine, till almost unable to perform their duty. Cuthbert, as usual, attended in the hall, and during an interval from his music, Richard De Launcy, to create mirth, addressing him, said,

“What say'st thou, fool, wilt thou go to court with me?”

“Is there a want of fools there, master?” replied Cuthbert, in his usual

vacant manner. "I thought you were going thither yourself."

"Do'st thou mean that I am a fool?" replied Richard, angrily.

"Oh! No, good master; I only feared to overstock the market."

"Thou art a knave," returned he; "but I repeat, if my father will spare thee, I will take thee with me."

"Not to court, surely, master; you cannot want knaves there:—If you do, I am ready; but what is to be given away?"

"There is scarcely ought to be given to such a fool as thee."

"Cry your mercy," answered Cuthbert: "If you give only to wise men, I presume, the King has a thin company."

Lord De Launcy looked attentively at

at Cuthbert. "Thou hast been drinking wine," said he; "if thou do'st so again, I will correct thee."

"Will you correct all the lackeys that drink wine," returned Cuthbert.

"All; so remember, least thou art included in the number."

"Marry, you'll have a good breathing then, for we have all drank wine.—But, master, who will correct you?"

"No one, I have a right to act as I please."

"And who gave you a right?" said Cuthbert.

"My rank, my fortune."

"Oh, ho," replied he, "I understand now, drunkenness is a peculiar privilege."

Cuthbert's pertinent replies entertained the guests; who, amusing themselves

selves till the night was far advanced, at length separated.

Cuthbert's observations respecting the lackeys was strictly true, for before the hour of midnight, all were completely inebriated. Cuthbert appeared to consider their situation with attention, and did not fail to remark, that they had neglected to secure the gates. —All buried in sleep, and a single lamp burning in the hall, with careful step he stole to Margaret's apartment, and struck gently on the door.—The dame and her youthful charge had retired to rest, but started at the noise, the first saying, "Who are you, that disturbs us at this late hour? Be assured such rudeness shall not pass unnoticed."

"Dear lady," answered he, "one word.

word for the love of Heaven; my business is your own personal safety. I am friar Austin's friend, and the friend of the lady-Margaret."

Alice paused.—She feared to open the door; yet knowing that if the intruder spoke false, and was ill-disposed, it could be easily forced, she determined to admit him; therefore, bidding him be silent, while she prepared for his reception, she dressed herself in haste, as did also Margaret.

Alice opened the door. Her lamp had not been extinguished: she raised it to his face; but started back when she discovered it was Cuthbert.—

"Suffer no alarm; I am not what I seem," said he, baring his arm; "behold, I am no Ethiopian,—my business is to set you free. Friar Austin

can

can dispose of you in safety, till opportunity serves to convey you to the care of the abbess Adelaide. Lose no time: I have in vain waited fourteen days for an opportunity to serve you; this night the inebriety of the domestics has furnished me with it, therefore, if it be possible, accompany me. I am convinced that you are not in safety here."

Alice and Margaret paused. In the mind of the dame fear arose that Cuthbert might be employed for some sinister purpose by the lord De Launcy, and under the appearance of friendship, be only drawing them into a snare.

"You say," at length replied the dame, "that you are father Austin's friend, and to confess truly my heart
speaks,

speaks in your behalf; but 'tis ever good to be cautious.—What are you called?"

"Leopold."

"Leopold!" repeated Margaret, warmly. "I have no longer any fears; the man who came so far to bring the only voucher of my mother's honour, cannot be doubted by Margaret."

"May shame be my portion when I forfeit the trust you repose in me," replied he; "but let us lose no time, the wish nearest Austin's heart is to place you in safety. 'Tis now not more than an hour past midnight, and the domestics are buried in the heaviness of intoxication."

"The Virgin direct us," answered Alice, "the advice of the friar is at this moment so necessary to Margaret, that

that I would almost give my life to procure it.—Retire for a short time; we will but tie up a change of garments, and then accompany you.”

Leopold immediately obeyed; descending into the hall, to hearken if all remained quiet, the sound of steps struck on his ear, and, drawing aside, to his utter astonishment Richard De Launcy and two of his men entered in close consultation. The name of Margaret and of Alice were frequently repeated and attracted Leopold's attention.

“It is the only opportunity that will ever occur,” at length said De Launcy. “The bridge, through negligence, is not drawn back, the keys are in the gates, and on my fleetest horse you may soon be safe from pursuit.”

“But think you not there will be danger

danger of being overheard if she goes not willingly," said one of them ; " and what shall we do with the old woman?"

" We will bind and gag her," replied De Launcy. " For Margaret, her apartment is so distant, there is little danger ; secure but her mouth while you cross the hall. Take the road to Edinburgh, it will baffle pursuit : my father will have no suspicion, as I shall not depart till seven, and will then join you as soon as possible. If her doors are secured they must be forced.—I have observed from her windows, that a lamp is always burning in her chamber, so we will take no light through the galleries, for fear of discovery."

36 " I can place her on horseback before
fore

fore me" said one of the men, "if we find her unruly, and Thomas can occasionally relieve me; but should any questions be asked, what reply shall we make?"

"Say that she hath eloped from her parents, and that you are taking her back.—Go thou, Thomas, prepare the horses, and bring them to the foot of the bridge; Gilbert and I, in the mean time, will wait another half hour, to listen if all remain quiet, and then convey her to thee. Away, remember my purse shall repay thy services."

This discourse convinced Leopold, that to escape with Margaret was now impossible, and all that remained was to secure her from violence; therefore, leaving De Launcy and his men, he hastened through the castle, fastened the

the gates, threw the chains across the bridge, and secured the portal ; then concealing the keys, he repaired to the armory, took a sword, and a dagger and returned to Margaret's chamber, to inform her of the discovery he had made.

The most acute fears at the recital seized on both Margaret and Alice ; but the precaution of Leopold in securing the gates in some measure reassured them. " Trust to me," said he, and I will answer with my life no mischief shall ensue.—Secure yourselves in your chamber, I will protect you from insult."

" Not by your personal danger," replied Margaret ; " I cannot consent to that alternative."

" There is no danger. In this cause,
however

however repugnant to my nature, I will meet fraud with deception. They will come without light, and doubtless unarmed; for they have no idea of any resistance that may need weapons. In bodily strength I am more than equal to them both, and in case of necessity have a sword; but, I am convinced, I shall have no occasion to use it."

The sound of distant steps at that moment struck them. "Close your door," added he, "and fear nothing: you shall see me again when it can be done with safety; but I doubt we must relinquish all hopes of escape this night."

As he spoke he left them. Alice imploring the blessed Saints to guard him, and Margaret, in her heart, repeating the same prayer.

Leopold

Leopold placed himself in darkness at the entrance of a narrow gallery, that the intruders must unavoidably pass, and had not waited more than a minute, before Richard De Launcy, with his man, drew near. They spoke in a whisper, yet loud enough to be overheard by Leopold.—“Advance no further,” said he, in his natural tone of voice, which rendered him unknown to De Launcy, “Margaret Fitzwalter has a protector, who will defend her from fraud and villainy at the hazard of his life.—Is this lurking, like a midnight thief, to commit violence on a defenceless maid, an action worthy the rank you hold in life?”

“And who are *you* that thus presume to question me?” returned De Launcy,

Launcy, "and dare to bar my passage in this dwelling."

"The friend of innocence,—one who would scorn to ill-treat a woman, one who, if you persist to advance a single step further, will crush your silken form to atoms."

Though De Launcy loved Margaret, his affection for himself was yet stronger, and made him involuntarily draw back, while Gilbert, courageous with wine, advanced, but in the attempt to pass, received so severe a blow from Leopold's clenched hand, as levelled him with the ground.——"How like you that?" said he, not knowing on which he had bestowed the stroke.——"'Tis but to teach you what to expect:—I have weapons, but will not use them unless

unless compelled, therefore begone, I will hold no further parley with you." So saying, he advanced towards De Launcy, who, though he retreated, received some smart strokes: for Gilbert, one specimen had been sufficient, and taking the lead of his master, he left the gallery as speedily as possible.

Leopold pursued them to the end of the corridor, and heard them descend the stairs; but before they had reached the half way, a voice, which Leopold conceived to be that of Thomas, exclaimed, in a low but fearful accent,—
“ Master, are you there?—The devil, I think, is abroad to-night; for the gates are now all closed, barred, and double locked. If you have the lady Margaret, I know not what we shall
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do with her, for it is impossible to get the horses."

Leopold could scarcely restrain his laughter.

"Ah, too surely it is the devil," replied Gilbert, "for no mortal arm could deal such a blow as I have received.—They don't scruple to whisper here, that lord Fitzwalter's spirit is not satisfied respecting his daughter, and if so 'tis that has raised this combustion; but hereafter she may sleep in safety for me, for nothing shall tempt me to such another encounter."

"Fetch me a light from the hall," said De Launcy, "I am resolved to examine that part of the castle, and discover who is concealed there."

"I will willingly fetch a lamp," answered Gilbert, "but the devil take
me

me if I attempt another attack. I like not your fights in ambush ; next time I may perhaps get a dagger's point in my guts."

" I will swear," said Thomas, " that when I first spoke with you in the hall, the keys were in the gates ; but now they are chained, locked, and barred : at least I judge so from the portal ; and I am convinced there is not a human creature except ourselves stirring in the castle."

De -Launcy, accompanied by his men, then examined the gates which they found securely fastened, and the keys removed. He then proposed to them to take lights, and attend him in search of the person that had treated them so roughly ; but anger or persuasions were alike vain to influence them

to accompany him.—To make the search alone he had not courage, and was not without his surmises, that by some means his father had discovered his intention, and had taken this measure to frustrate it ; but who the person employed to attack him could be, bewildered his imagination. His speech and conduct proclaimed him no domestic ; and for the guests, they were casual acquaintance, rather entertained through pride than friendship, and to whom he was convinced lord De Launcy would never confide such a trust. The stranger, too, had said he was armed, but, unless compelled, would not use his weapon : in that trait he concluded he discovered his father's commands ; but, confused by a thousand doubts, he knew not how to fix
on

on any, till at length dismissing his men, he retired to his chamber.

Left to himself, other thoughts took place. His rival, or the man his father wished to make so, was in the castle; and who so likely to be watching in the avenues of Margaret's apartment? Yet, again, the voice did not seem his, nor could he suppose he was sufficiently powerful to strike such blows as even himself had received. The last, and most torturing thought that occurred was, that Margaret had a favoured lover:—but what or who could he be? During the time he had been at the castle, however minute in his enquiries, he had been led to think she had no attachment beyond that of friendship, and that alone for the friar.—Strew ever so lightly the seeds of jealousy,

lousy, and they grow and increase apace. The more he revolved, the more the supposition gained ground; the voice that had accosted him, he now thought sounded like Austin's; the friar's uncommon attachment to Margaret, her constant visits to his cell, and, lastly, her refusal of his offers, and the visible dislike with which Austin had listened to his proposals.

To counter-balance these surmises, he reflected on the age of Austin, his palid and care-worn person, his apparent sanctity, the constant attendance of Alice in all Margaret's visits to the cave, and to complete the whole, he recalled to his memory the discourse he had overheard at the chapel. That bespoke nothing beyond parental affection, and, deliberately weighed, banished

nished the rising jealousy, and fixed his suspicions where they at had first directed—on his father.

This idea, though far from pleasing, was more supportable than the thought of a favoured rival; it banished the acute desire he had to search the part of the castle where Margaret's apartments were situated, and though he knew not how he should excuse his conduct to his father, he had no doubt of palliating it by a proper concession. With these ideas he at length retired to bed, resolved, however, on no account to depart in the morning, but to feign sickness, in order to prevent it.

In the mean time Leopold waited until all was again silent, then repaired to Margaret's chamber, who, with the dame, was expecting him with the ut-

most anxiety. He related to them what had passed, and proposed that they should now seize the opportunity, and adventure to escape.

The intended violence of Richard De Launcy had redoubled Margaret's anxiety to leave the castle, and with the approbation of Alice, she at once consented. Leopold took the bundle of garments they had tied up, Margaret secured her dove, whom she declared she would not leave, and giving her arm to support the dame, preceded by Leopold, they, in darkness and silence passed the galleries, and descended the stairs. Crossing the hall they reached the portal, which Leopold speedily unlocked, and letting them pass, secured the door after them, a precaution he also used at the gates,

as

as he observed, that in case of discovery, it would afford them time to escape before they could be pursued. On reaching the bridge he drew up the chains, and in a few minutes they found themselves in the avenue that led to the hamlet. Here he would fain have persuaded them to make a stop to recover their perturbation; but anxious to be out of the purlieus of the castle, they declined it, and Leopold entreating the dame to lean on his arm, they hastened to the friar's cell. Leopold first entering called aloud on Austin.—The friar's mind was too much agitated for his sleep to be sound, and instantly starting from his bed of rushes, he exclaimed, “Heaven be praised! 'tis Leopold's voice; displeased as I have been with your departure,

parture, my son, I am so greatly rejoiced at your return, that I have not words to express ought but satisfaction, as my heart whispers you will find an excuse for your absence."

"I have brought it with me, dear father," replied Leopold. "Strike a light,—we have no time to lose, the lady Margaret and dame Alice are with me: before day we must bestow them in safety.—They only wait your rising to enter."

"Heavenly powers! How is this possible?" said Austin, hastily putting on his cloak (for his other garments had not been taken off), "you astonish me.—If, indeed, you have saved my beloved child, my prayers and blessings shall ever attend you."

"I crave a share in your blessing,
dear

“dear father,” cried Margaret, who now entered with Alice, and running up to Austin kissed his hand. The friar pressed her to his bosom, as he did also Alice, and reaching his flint and steel, struck a light. The beams of the lamp reflecting on Leopold’s face, the father started.—“Holy Virgin!” exclaimed he, “what means this? surely my eyes deceive me, what strange disguise hast thou assumed, my son?”

“Indeed, father,” answered he, “I had forgotten the change made in my complexion, or would have informed you of it to prevent surprise: now it is no time.—Direct, or rather lead the way to the spot, where you mean to conceal the lady Margaret; for when missed, she will doubtless be sought after.”

“Astonishing youth,” said Austin aside, “for what wonders art thou reserved, if any judgment may be formed from the beginning of thy life. Thou counselest well,” added he, turning to Leopold, “in a place of safety we may discourse more fully of these events that now cause my wonder.”

“So saying they prepared to depart, Austin taking with him implements for procuring fire, a vessel for water, and also some eggs and fruit, which the villagers had brought him the day before.

CHAP. III.

THEY walked hastily forward, and in silence, till they reached the path that crossed the mountains, where they were well convinced they should at that hour meet no other travellers.—“I mean to conceal you,” said Austin, in an excavation of the same mountain under which is my cell, but nearer to the summit, and whose opening is from a hollow towards the sea, which at high-tide is overflowed; a circumstance that will secure it from search, as no one in this vicinity, nor perhaps in any other, have ever explored it but myself, and may imagine danger, when in reality there is none.—The abode is
doubtless

doubtless, dreary ; but your residence there, I trust, will be short, for, the first alarm over, no time must be lost to convey you to Germany : for once assured of your personal safety I can act without fear."

Thus conversing they reached the descent from the mountains, and walking a short way by the shore, passed several deep hollows, all of which the sea overflowed at high-tide.

"Observe," said Austin, "in all these excavations there are deep, nay, perhaps, bottomless pits at the extremity, save only that I have mentioned, which is perfectly safe ; but a knowledge of the danger of the rest, leaves no doubt of any being exempt, to those who have not particularly examined them." Austin, as he passed along,
had

had collected some wood, as had also Leopold, and at length reaching the spot alluded to, the friar stopped.

“We are unfortunate,” said he, “for the sea has left the entrance scarcely passable for women ; however, in a few minutes, we shall not only have passed the most unpleasant part, but, I trust, be secure from danger.”

As he spoke, he entered, and striking a light, with his lamp prepared to lead the way, while Leopold, throwing down the wood and the bundle of garments he carried, with great tenderness caught up the good dame, and bore her through the hollow, to where the rocky bottom was dry ; then, with the speed of lightning, he returned, and without question, though she entreated to the contrary, snatched up Margaret, and soon placed

placed her in safety by Alice. He then went back, and fetched the garments and wood, and requesting the father to lead the way, himself followed the women.

The wide opening towards the sea, admitted sufficient air to keep the spot clear from noxious vapours, and having walked on an ascent for near two hundred feet, the path suddenly became steep and narrow, full of windings, with some few hollows on either side, tremendous to the view, from the faint light which the lamp cast over them. Austin, lost in anxious thoughts respecting Margaret's situation, proceeded in silence; Margaret and Alice, in terror at the gloomy scene before them, followed; while Leopold, conceiving the feeling of each, sought by lively sallies,

sallies, such as he had never before shewn, to divert the minds of all. Thus they proceeded, till at length they came to a turning where the path widened, and in a few moments brought them to a spot, which was enlightened and aired by the aperture at the summit of the mountain.

There they stopped to repose, and Austin pointing with his finger, shewed them a recess, which he informed them must, for the present, be their dwelling.

“Welcome be it, dear father,” said Margaret, “if it secures me from the persecution of the lord De Launcy and his son—I shall have my good dame with me, and we shall see you every day.”

“I hope so,” replied the father, but dame Alice, you do not speak; I trust,

trust, the courage you have shewn for years, will not fail you at this juncture.*

“ Father,” returned Alice, “ if I have been silent, it arose from a motive which you cannot disapprove. I have, in wonder, been recalling to my memory, a circumstance unknown to all but myself; our present position awakened the remembrance, and adoring the wisdom of Providence, I cannot but think, that all is working together for the great end we wish; and that the spirit of the blessed Blanch, though in sleep, spoke truly, when it promised protection to her child, under the vaulted roof of St. Margaret.”

Alice then related the dream, that had so alarmed Blanch a few days before her delivery; and all joined in declaring it a happy prognostic.—The
active

active Leopold, then entering the recess pointed out by the father, kindled a blazing fire, and leaving them for a while, during which they suffered some uneasiness at his absence, at length returned, heavily laden with rushes, moss, and whatever he could find most proper to make them a bed.

During his absence, Margaret and Alice had related all they knew of his residence, and their own escape from the castle ; as Austin had also his fears, not only on their account, but on Leopold's. He acquainted them, that he had made repeated enquiries, and had also written to the lord De Launcy, but had received no answer, but contemptuous language. Leopold arrived, to complete the relation. He informed them of the art he had used to gain entrance

entrance into the castle, and whatever had happened that they were unacquainted with.—“ But,” continued he, “ now it can be done without too much alarming you, I must inform you, that your flight has saved you from a danger, equally as great as that you had to fear from Richard De Launcy. His father, who considered me as an idiot, spoke more freely before me than he would otherwise have done. Two days since, I heard him in earnest conversation with his secretary, Stratford, and from what disjointed sentences I could gather, he pledged his word to force the lady Margaret to accept him. They spoke of a priest from Scotland, and of a marriage concluded in the dead of night; but, as I comprehended, not to be attempted till after the departure of

Richard

Richard De Launcy. This discourse convinced me no time was to be lost; for though I would have devoted my life in so good a cause, yet overpowered by numbers, all my efforts would have been unavailing."

"Generous youth!" exclaimed Alice, "the sense of our obligations to you are written on our hearts. Heaven! give Margaret means to repay them; if not, the Power who inspires such sentiments of rectitude as you possess, will himself reward, and acknowledge them."

"Father," said Margaret warmly, "and you, my good dame, observe my words, and the promise I make in the hour of distress; and so may it be registered above. I will consider this youth as a second Austin; and as he
calls

calls him son, so also shall he be unto me as a brother."

"To have contributed to the lady Margaret's safety," replied Leopold, "is of itself so sufficient a reward, that I would not forfeit it for the wealth of a thousand such men as lord De Launcy."

"That Leopold is at once brave and prudent," returned Austin, "we have proof; and that Margaret will, when in her power, be grateful, I have no doubt. But, come; 'tis time we act the cooks, for you must need refreshment, and I will take care you shall not want it."

Austin then placed the eggs to roast, which, together with some fruit, constituted their meal—"I now think," said he, "that it will be prudent for
me

me to return to the chapel, or to my cell, as suspicion will, doubtless, light on me, and I shall be there to answer it."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Margaret, "though I feel my courage would never sink in any abode while your presence supported me, yet when you are gone, I fear both for the dame and for myself."

"Leopold being missing, or, as they suppose him, Cuthbert," returned Austin, "no doubt an active search will take place for him; he had then, I think, better remain, for the present, in one of the hollows lower in the mountain: it will not only insure his own safety, but be a security for you, though I am convinced there is not the most distant occasion for alarm."

"Father,"

“Father,” said Leopold, “on laying down the bundle of garments when we came to your cell this morning, I also laid down a sword, which I have forgotten. I do not need it, for I have a dagger, which I secured at the same time; but should a search be made there, it may awake suspicion.”

“I will seek it and put it aside,” replied Austin. “In the darkness of night, in all probability, you will see me again, or perhaps David, whom I shall hasten to inform of what has happened—Not the lord De Launcy’s revenue will bring the vassals here after midnight, so you need not fear being discovered by that means. You have fruit and eggs, and I will procure more against you see me again: at night we can fetch water from a spring that runs
between

between this and the adjacent mountain."

Austin, as he spoke, rose to leave them.—Alice clasped his garment, while Margaret pressed his hand to her lips.—“Fie on you both,” said he, “this weakness is unbecoming, of either the friend, or daughter of William Fitzwalter. In this dwelling vice is not to be feared; ’tis under gilded roofs and in sumptuous palaces that she seeks a lurking place. In the luxuries of the loaded table, the flowing bowl, or the wanton dance; it was there the fiend first discovered me; it was there she poisoned, betrayed, destroyed, and curst me——No; my beloved child,” continued he, struggling to overcome his emotion, “there is nothing here to fear: all is calm as innocence. Would to Heaven I had been born, bred, and

died in such a retreat; then, indeed, might I have been happy—”

“Father,” said Leopold, willing to divert the discourse, “I will relate to the lady Margaret, and the good dame, the history of myself, as I before related it to you; at least, it will assist in passing the time till your return.”

“Do so,” answered Austin; “though not connectedly, they know it already by parcels: it will, however, as you say, beguile the hours.”

Austin then again bid them adieu, Leopold, at his desire, accompanying him to the hollow that afforded an entrance to this dreary dwelling.

The light that beamed from the aperture in the mountain, rendered a lamp superfluous to Margaret and Alice, except they retired to the excavated apartment,

ment Austin had pointed out, and where the fire still blazed with renovating heat. Leopold bearing the lamp, accompanied the father till they came nearly to the hollow, that opened immediately to the shore: there the father paused—"My son," said he, "I wished to converse with you a moment alone, without giving rise to fresh fears in the mind of Alice or Margaret. I have no doubt of the most severe scrutiny being made when the elopement is discovered; it may, and I think will involve me; but of this be assured, I will rather seek than avoid it, as it will the more speedily bring all to a conclusion. What I would therefore say is, that should it be so, I conjure you to take no step respecting me, but leave the event to chance."

“Never,” answered Leopold, “shall you suffer for what I am guilty of. I stole the lady Margaret, and care not if the whole world knew the fact; for I alone, if need be, will suffer for it.”

“Leopold,” returned Austin, calmly, “should our enemies even seize me, I will, by the power of the Franciscans, insist of being tried before the King; in which case, I pledge you my veracity and honour, that I am *sure* of being released. Observe me well; should therefore what I suspect happen, to you I confide the care of Margaret; apply to the fathers of Berwick for money; procure a vessel from the nearest port, and in the stillness of night convey your charge on board; deliver her safe to the abbess Adelaide, and leave the rest to Heaven.”

“Father,”

“ Father,” answered Leopold, “ I am your son: do with me what you please; I will, if possible, fulfil your commands.”

“ Enough,” replied Austin, “ if nothing intervenes, you will see me at night; but should ought prevent my coming, and you be forced to go forth, which I conjure you avoid if possible; cleanse the colour from your face and hands, as it makes you the more liable to be discovered. Adieu, my brave youth,” continued he, “ all will, I trust, be well: take care of your safety; ’tis dearer to me than my own.”

“ Farewell, thou more than Father,” answered Leopold as they parted, “ I will obey thy commands; but still, if I have the feelings of a son, I must act a son’s part.”

As the friar bid Leopold farewell, he observed the tide was coming in; and resolved to profit by the opportunity, he took off his cloaths, and waiting the influx of the sea into the hollow, washed and cleansed his skin from the stain that discoloured it, then cloathing himself, and taking his lamp, he returned to Margaret and Alice.

“Welcome,” said the dame, as she heard his step advancing; but on his appearance she uttered a fearful cry, for the water had so much changed his person, that she no longer knew him, and had no doubt but they were discovered, and that he was some emissary sent to surprise and seize them. His voice, however, instantly banished her fear; and having expressed sorrow for his inadvertence, they seated themselves
in

in the current of the fresh air that issued from the aperture, and discoursed on different subjects, till Margaret reminded him of the promise he had made of relating the events of his life.

“Willingly,” replied he; “but by the recital, let me not lose in your opinion. I have been unfortunate, but not criminal; and though the son of a peasant, feel, that had fate placed me higher in life, I would have endeavoured not to disgrace my station—As it is, I will be content, if I can in any means be useful to those who honour me by accepting my services.”

“Many there be,” answered Alice, “who disgrace the high rank in which God hath placed them; and others there be, who do honour to his image, though imprinted on the lowest of his

creatures; and an honest man, my generous friend, will not hesitate to fix his choice on the latter."

"True," replied Leopold; yet there are moments when I have weakness sufficient to wish my birth had been otherways."

"You do well to name it weakness," said Margaret. "Your friends will love you for your own sake, not for your father's—but come, I am impatient to hear the relation of what, though imperfectly told by friar Austin, so greatly interested me."

Leopold obeyed; both listened to him with attention. Margaret could not hear the conduct of his father with patience; she was charmed with his account of friar John, and bestowed a tear to his memory, which reached the heart

heart of Leopold. His description of the ladies Clarice and Adelaide deeply interested her. The behaviour of Ferdinand De Hoffman called forth her warmest praise ; but her heart recoiled at the character of the Count, and interrupting his narrative, she exclaimed, "Is it possible that that man could ever have been the friend of my father ? for such, I understand, he was. Surely some dreadful calamity has destroyed his reason, or he could not act thus."

Alice made no comment, and Leopold continued his relation, until the time he resolved to liberate Margaret from the castle—"I saw," said he, "that Austin's alarm was so great for your safety, that he would have ventured any hazard to set you free. He, however, thought it not safe to trust me ;

he feared, perhaps, my youth, and that I might only involve myself in danger, and encrease your difficulties. Aware of his desires, and the struggle he endured, I resolved, without his permission, to exert my skill in accomplishing what he wished. Framing, therefore, an excuse to leave him and David one afternoon in the chapel, I hastened to the shore, and speedily found a marine production, that I was well acquainted with while in Palestine, and which being burned, the ashes possess the property of tinging the skin as you witnessed, and whose stain is only to be removed by sea water, or a strong lixivium of salt and earth. In my pocket I had a pipe, which had been my companion during my journey from Jerusalem, and with which I have beguiled

many

many an hour in my lone perambulation; and that, in my boyish days, used to employ all my leisure time. As on that instrument I had been accounted to have some skill, I determined to make it subservient to my purpose; therefore, after burning the weed, colouring my skin, disordering my habit, and leaving my cloak, with my tablets to quiet the father's uneasiness on my account, I took the road to the castle. An appearance of idiotism, I concluded, would prevent my answering questions that might be asked me; therefore, mixing it with some show of cunning, I succeeded in attracting Lord De Launcy's attention, and what I yet more sincerely wished, in effecting your deliverance."

CHAP. IV.

WHILE Leopold was relating his story to Margaret and Alice, Austin had returned to his cell, where he found the sword Leopold had left. Raising it, he started with astonishment—"On my life," said he, "whatever that youth attempts or acts, is marked with some extraordinary circumstance—That out of the whole armory he should select *this* particular sword, surpasses belief. Many there are far more likely to strike the eye than this, which has honour alone to recommend it; and yet, of all others, is most welcome at this time to me."

With the utmost caution Austin then

concealed the weapon in a crevice of the rock, where it was secure from being discovered; and as all remained in the cell as he had left it, he concluded no one as yet had been there. In his usual manner, he then took the way to the chapel, where he had no doubt of finding David. He was not mistaken, the good man was already there, and anxious at his long stay, was just on the point of going to seek him. In few words, the friar related all that had passed at the castle, and the manner in which he had, for the present, disposed of Margaret. David listened to him with astonishment, a thousand blessings did he call forth on the head of the youth, and both joining at length in prayer, they besought the Power that had thus far guided the orphan, to continue

tinue his protection, till she was placed in safety and honour, in the rights befitting her birth and name.

* * * * *

In the mean time Margaret was not missed till near the hour of noon at the castle. As she had no attendant allowed but Jaques, the dame usually took in the evening sufficient provision to serve them till the ensuing day at dinner, by which means the elopement was not discovered for some time later than it might otherways have been.

In the morning, at the hour of seven, which Richard De Launcy had appointed for his departure, he pretended a sudden illness, and not only put off his journey, but did not appear at breakfast.

breakfast. Lord De Launcy immediately hastened to his apartment, and expressed his concern for his indisposition; but, to his son's great surprise, neither by words nor actions gave him any cause to suppose he was informed of the adventure of the night before. Lord De Launcy conversed with him on various subjects, and among others at length said, "I mean this day to make some examples among the domestics, for last night the men were all so completely intoxicated, that they left the bridge down, and though they secured the gates, not one this morning knew where to find the keys, and in consequence they have, with great difficulty, been obliged to be broken open." The baron's words increased his son's uneasiness. The encounter in
the

the dark, and the sudden closing of the gates recurred to his mind, and he was now convinced, that his father was unacquainted with the whole transaction; yet was his apartment so distant from that of Margaret's, that he could find no excuse for saying he was informed of what passed in that part of the dwelling. At length, however, he observed, that the castle the night before had been full of noises. "I am convinced," added he, "there were strange voices: had I not been disordered I should have risen, and sought who it might be."

"I heard nothing," said De Launcy; but, doubtless, if there were any, it was merely the drunken lackeys, who scarcely sober even now, do not scruple to declare, that the devil has flown away with the keys of the gates.

Among

“ Among the foremost of these varlets, are your men Gilbert and Thomas. I request you will chide them severely, if not dismiss them ; for should such a report gain ground, it will next be rumoured, that it is the spirit of Fitzwalter, which rises in behalf of his daughter.”

Glad of this opportunity of speaking on the subject, Richard replied,—“ It is not impossible but cabals may be formed on her account : she has, I have no doubt, secret friends under this roof, and who knows, who may in private be introduced to her.”

“ That I defy,” replied De Launcy.
 “ I trust not to one, but to many ; and though some might play me false, all would not : at least the common dissensions,

sions among domestics would make them betray each other."

"I know not that; but I pray you take this warning; let the castle be examined; I have good intelligence that some secret doings are acting. I find myself better, and will endeavour to rise and assist the search."

Lord De Launcy, though he thought the precaution superfluous, made but few objections, and Richard, leaving his bed, prepared to accompany him. Calling some of the domestics, they explored the chambers as they passed, secured the doors on the outside, and proceeded to Margaret's apartment.

The doors were closed,—lord De Launcy knocked, and asked admittance; but receiving no answer, some

of

of his son's suspicions suddenly reverted to himself, and calling repeatedly aloud, he at length lost all patience, and ordered the door to be broken. Not finding Margaret and Alice, amazement for some moments struck him dumb; but recovering his first emotion, turning suddenly to his son,—“It is plain, Richard,” said he, “by your discourse, that you suspected this treachery; wherefore was it concealed from me? And what judgment am I to form? Either you are privy to their flight, and take this means to conceal it, or you have reason to suspect some one is more favoured than yourself.”

“If there be,” replied he, thrown off his guard at once by a wish of vengeance and the tortures of disappointed love, “it can be no one but that vil-

lain

lain Austin. Her constant visits, his anxiety on her account, all bespeak it."

"Ridiculous," answered his father, "think you a girl, blooming in youth and beauty, could find no better gallant, than a poor old friar? Jealousy makes you blind. He is doubtless privy to her elopement; but if any object is nearer concerned than friendship, be sure 'tis a younger man."

This observation was but pouring oil on fire; Richard's rage discovering to his father, that though innocent of her flight, it was rather want of power than inclination.

Lord De Launcy's agitation, though from another cause, was at least equal to his son's. He hastened to lady De Launcy, and disclosed to her what had happened. The rage and vexation of
both

both combined was poor to that of the lady. In Margaret's flight she was aware of a thousand dangers: she was convinced that, unless she could be regained, her deep-laid plots would be fruitless; for Margaret on the verge of eighteen, could now claim the protection of the law, and bring all to a fair and legal hearing. Austin had before made her tremble, and she had no doubt would be foremost to declare all he knew, one only hope remained, and that was, that they could not authenticate the marriage of Fitzwalter with Blanch, or if they could, as he had acted in opposition to her father's will, she had still the claim on the mortgage. To counterbalance these advantages, there were many transactions which she shuddered to think

think might be brought before the world, and in the most energetic terms she entreated lord De Launcy to lose no time in causing her to be pursued; and above all to hasten to the friar, and search his cell, as it was more than probable she might be concealed there. This advice was too consonant with De Launcy's wishes to be neglected; and calling forth his men, with his son, he took the way to the cave. All there was silent, and, exploring every part, they could discover no vestige, that might lead to realize their suspicions. From the cell they went to the chapel, where Austin was just rising from his knees.—“Hypocrite! what have you done with Margaret?” said lord De Launcy, “where have you concealed her?—

her?—Answer with truth, or your life shall pay the deception.”

“Surely,” replied Austin calmly, “you forget where you are, and in whose presence you stand. Are the saints to be insulted at their very altars, by the rude brawling of your anger?”

“Villain! where is Margaret? last night you were in the castle, myself heard your voice,” said Richard.

“If you heard my voice in the castle last night,” replied Austin, “I congratulate you, that your ears are so much keener than your wit; for, on my life, I have not been in the castle since I came to ask that justice for Margaret, which I was denied.”

“’Tis false,” exclaimed Richard, “a lie suited to your purpose. I will swear that I myself heard you.”

“I have

“ I have no doubt,” answered Austin, “ but you will *swear that*, or any thing else that may answer your purpose; but those that are prone to swear, will also frequently lie. You come to me to enquire of Margaret. Young man; here, in the presence of your father, I ask the question; what were your designs on Margaret, last night? answer that truly, and I pledge my veracity to answer you.”

Richard De Launcy was confused.—
“ My designs,” returned he,—“ what are my designs to you?”

“ Since you will not answer the question I will.—Your designs were to bind a helpless old woman, to tear Margaret with unmanly violence from her father's house, and her own domain, and to bear her to Scotland. What further
your

your intentions were, I know not.—I have already, I deem, said as much as you wish to hear.”

Though lord De Launcy would not appear to pay credit to what Austin had advanced, he plainly saw its truth in the confusion of Richard; but waving the subject before so many witnesses, he said,—“ ’Tis not my son’s intentions I wish discussed, ’tis what you have done with Margaret is the question. Neither your apparent sanctity, nor your hypocrisy, shall preserve you, unless you instantly disclose where she is carried and concealed.”

“ You move my contempt, though I trust I have mastery sufficient over my passions, to stifle every emotion of anger,” answered Austin.” Can you, judging by yourself, think so meanly

of me, if even I was privy to Margaret's flight, to suppose the secret is to be forced from me by fear or threats?"

"Your life shall answer your baseness," said De Launcy, "the mask shall be torn from you, and the world shall see you as you are."

"'Tis indeed time the mask was removed from us all," returned Austin, "then would the innocent possess their right, and the oppressors meet their deserved punishment."

"Insolent priest! give not your tongue such license, lest I strike you, even where you stand, to teach you what is due to your superiors."

"You surely would forget yourself should you act thus," answered the friar. "As well as paying respect to your king, remember it to your God, whom

whom you now insult, in the person of his servant, at the foot of his altar.—

Worm that you are, learn to respect your brother reptile ; let humility quench the fire of pride that dilates your bosom, lest, like a devouring flame, it burst its bounds, and overwhelm you in its ruin."

De Launcy, foaming with rage, turning to his men exclaimed, " I will bear no more ; seize him, and convey him to the castle."

" Misguided men beware," said Austin, " not all your master's power could save you from the forfeiture of assaulting a priest at the altar.—Men come to the house of God to hear truth, and lord De Launcy *shall* hear it if he comes hither.—The first duty of a great man is justice ; let him do that, and

love mercy, then shall his life be an honour to his Maker, and his death be glorious to himself."

The boldness of Austin made the men draw back, while lord De Launcy, unwilling to shew the effect it had upon himself, said,—“you shall answer your conduct before judges, who will tame that arrogant spirit.”

“My conduct to you, and all who concern you, with all humility, I think, I can answer before a heavenly, much more before an earthly tribunal. — Would my heart, in all respects, was as clear, then should you long since have known me better.”

“Your deeds are, I doubt not, dark enough,” answered De Launcy. “In the solitude of a prison, and on a bed of straw, with bread and water, you
will

will find time to recal them to your memory."

"Neither a prison nor a bed of straw are necessary for that purpose," said Austin. "To you, indeed, who dwell in palaces, and pamper your appetite with all the dainties of the table, and quench the thirst that luxury excites with wine, then sleep off your intemperance on bed's of down, a prison and a bed of straw might be a punishment:—but for me, accustomed to hardships, they would be none. The punishment I feel I carry with me, neither a palace can ease, nor a prison increase it. If I have in any manner wronged you, seek a legal redress; but, observe, I warn you, that the father Franciscans will see justice done to their brother. I demand an open

and a candid hearing, and the king alone shall be my judge."

The friar's confidence, the secrecy that had ever hung over him, his lofty carriage, his undaunted conduct, his appeal to the king, all conspired to bespeak he was of high rank, and made De Launcy pause.—“Will you then give me your word,” answered he more calmly, “that you were unacquainted with Margaret’s flight, and know not the place of her retreat?”

“You should have began by asking questions,” replied Austin, “I will, however, unreserved, answer them,—Margaret’s flight *was* unknown to me; the place of her retreat I *am* acquainted with, and can only give you this caution,—that all search and means to dis-

cover

cover her will be vain, until, in proper time and place, she claims her right."

"Her right—by what title?" said De Launcy.

"By a title that I shall not explain. I have hitherto spoken angrily, for which, Heaven pardon me! But, before we part, I will speak as a true friend.—Return home:—in the privacy of your closet, question and tax your wife's conscience to the uttermost; so may you perhaps save her from shame, and yourself from disgrace."

"Insolent! This to me?" exclaimed lord De Launcy.

"To any man, my lord," replied Austin. "'Tis my duty to speak truth, and I will do so;—a prophetic spirit bids me say yet more.—Before the yellow leaves shall again twice strew

the earth, Margaret shall be seated in the hall of her ancestors, and receive the allegiance of her vassals."

The impression the friar's words made on the attendants was not lost on De Launcy, and fearful of more unpleasant discoveries, he said,—“ 'Tis well,—for the present I leave you ; but be assured you will speedily hear from me, your treachery shall not go unpunished.”

“ I am to be found when you please,” replied Austin, “ I will rather court than fly from justice.”

Lord De Launcy then retired with his men, leaving Austin in the chapel.

* * * * *

De Launcy returned home in sullen silence. On entering the castle he dismissed

missed his followers, and turning to his son said,—“ I am at once grieved and vexed, Richard, to find you have been more concerned in this affair than I had the most distant idea of. Your persisting in addresses, which now plainly appear to have been disagreeable, have, I doubt not, hastened this business, which will, in all probability, be exposed to the world, and even recapitulated before the king. The power of the priests you are not to learn, and no doubt but Austin is assured of the body of Franciscans espousing his cause. Call forth the domestics—I will interrogate all; and, if possible, sift this transaction to the bottom. Lord De Launcy then questioned them separately, in order to discover if their accounts agreed, but ob-

tained no information till it came to the turn of Thomas, who, with some difficulty, related all he knew. Gilbert's account corroborated it, and procured some severe reprehension to Richard from his father.—Jaques came next: he was particularly questioned respecting all he had heard and seen during the time he attended Margaret; as, how she had been employed, and particularly whether he had reason to suppose any person but himself frequented her apartments.

“No, on my veracity, my lord,” answered Jaques, “I don't think a single creature ever entered the chamber but myself; then for employment, she was usually sewing, or reading, and so deeply engaged, that when I entered she would scarcely look even at me.”

“Did

“ Did she, or Alice, ever endeavour to draw you into conversation?” said De Launcy, “ on any subject.”

“ Never, my lord. I have frequently wondered at their taciturnity. I have been accustomed to a court, I have enjoyed the benefit of your lordship's example, and will be bold to say I am no vulgar lackey; yet had you employed Cuthbert, they could not have been more insensible.”

“ Cuthbert,” repeated lord De Launcy, “ where is he? I have not seen him this morning, let him be called.”

“ Now your lordship speaks of Cuthbert, I recollect the dame once asked me if we had not a minstrel in the castle; and I answered in the affirmative.”

Jaques, fearful of incurring displeasure,

sure, did not mention his having employed Cuthbert to carry the wood into Margaret's chamber ; and further questions were prevented, by some of the domestics entering to inform their master, that the minstrel was not to be found.

Lord De Launcy started from his seat, and with an oath exclaimed, " 'Tis now clear ; fool, idiot that I was, to take that fellow for what he appeared to be ; a thousand circumstances now strike me to the contrary. He was, doubtless, an emissary in this deep-laid scheme, and I alone am the fool, the idiot. Last night, while he replied to Richard's questions, something like suspicion crossed my mind, but giving it scarcely a second thought, I attributed his behaviour to drink.—Lose no time, let
diligent

diligent search be made; if I do not regain Margaret I will secure that insolent priest."

More domestics were then ordered to go in search of the runaways, and among others the disappointed secretary joined in the pursuit.

In the mean time lord De Launcy, with his son and some few attendants, went into the hamlet, where they carefully searched every house; but more especially that of David, but not finding the persons they sought, weary and disappointed they returned to the castle.

CHAP. V.

MARGARET, with her companions, in spite of the dreariness of their dwelling, passed their time comparatively easy to what did the residents at the castle: As night drew on, they anxiously waited the appearance of Austin; and had it not been for the supporting presence of Leopold, would have sunk under their fears. The moon shone bright, and the sky, bespangled with stars, was clearly discernible through the chasm at the summit of the mountain: Leopold, therefore, taking the lamp, which he carefully concealed in one of the inward cavities of the lower part of the rock, went and fetched
water,

water, and also profiting by the clearness of the night, returned loaded with shell-fish, that he had picked up on the shore.

Alice and Margaret both chid him for his boldness; but he laughed at their fears, and endeavoured to beguile the time by his sprightliness, though his own heart was torn with uneasiness respecting the friar, whom he had no doubt would have much to endure from the family of De Launcy. Near midnight; the sound of steps on the rocky passage, in some measure cheered their hearts; and, in a few minutes, Austin with David appeared. The good men were both loaded: Austin carried a lamp with a recruit of oil, and also a basket with provisions. David had a large bundle, containing two pillows
and

and a coverlid, with sundry little articles he thought might be wanting.

As the faithful servant considered the orphan, buried as it were in a living tomb, the tears flowed from his eyes, and advancing towards her, he respectfully raised the hand she held to him to his lips—"My good friend," said she, "why do you look thus? I am at ease, and, spite of all lord De Launcy can do, am rich; for God, who took from me one brave and noble father, hath, in Austin and yourself, given me two to supply his place. I have a tender mother in my dear dame; and now, as if my wealth was to increase, Heaven in Leopold hath given me a brother."

Austin related to them his altercation with De Launcy, and gave unto Leopold a letter, which he had written to
the

the fathers at Berwick, requesting him, in the course of a few days, to convey it to them—"You can," said he, "depart early, and let your return be in the dead of night, which will secure you from danger; but I would wish two or three days to elapse first."

Austin then drew Alice aside, and informed her, that he suspected the lord De Launcy would take means to secure his person; and on her expressing her anxiety, replied—"My good dame, it would now, I think, be an event rather to be desired than avoided, as all then would come to an immediate issue. The active spirit of Leopold will, I doubt not, contrive means to bear you in safety to Bremen, and on that account I am easy; but I have much more to say, draw nearer, for Leopold
nor

nor Margaret must yet know the enormity of my crimes."

"My dear master," answered Alice, "remember the expiation, and endeavour to sooth your wounded spirit—I will answer with my life to fulfil whatever you require."

They then retired yet further, and apparently held a long conversation, no word of which, however, escaped; but from the strong emotion of the friar, appeared to interest him deeply.

On joining Margaret, they found her in earnest dispute with David: she insisted on his taking back the pillows and coverlid he had brought with him; at least a part of them. "Indeed," said she, "I cannot bear poor Bridget to be bereft of her bedding—I am young and able to endure, but to her such an indulgence

indulgence is now become necessary, and I insist of your taking it back."

"And can you think, sweet child of my honoured lord, that either I or my wife would lay our heads in ease or peace, while yours had only a stone to rest upon?—David hath hitherto known his duty better, do not then vex his aged heart by a refusal."

Margaret, fearful of grieving the old man, accepted his offer; then seated around the crackling fire, they made an humble meal, but which, seasoned with thankfulness, at once recruited their strength and enlivened their spirits.

Having conversed till the night was far advanced, they separated; Austin, in bidding Margaret farewell, betrayed an emotion that he could not intirely conceal, and shaking the dame by the
hand,

hand, he said in a low voice, which was however overheard by both Margaret and Leopold——“Remember, good Alice, that though the wretched Austin yet lives, the tyrant murderer is dead”.

Leopold attended Austin and David to the hollow of the mountain, when, in the most energetic terms, he again recommended Margaret to his protection, saying, as he concluded——“I would she had a more aged protector; but remember, my son, that I confide her to your honour. You have a sacred trust; fulfil it nobly, and not only your friends, but the whole world, will applaud you.”

“I will do my duty, father, cost what it may, therefore do not fear me.”

Though Leopold replied boldly, and felt

felt that he meant to act as he spoke, yet he was aware that the task was not easy, and a burning blush, that at the moment overspread his cheeks (though unseen by Austin), plainly evinced, that though his honour might restrain it, his heart would be inclined to rebel——
“If nothing intervenes,” said Austin, you will see me at night; if you do not, you may judge I am prevented; but fear nothing, all will, I doubt not, be well.”

With these words, Austin and David retired, and Leopold returned to Alice and Margaret; and after a short discourse, withdrew to the hollow, which he had chosen for his resting place.

The vicissitudes of the last twenty-four hours had been so numerous, that they banished all desire of rest. The
words

words too, of Austin to the dame, astonished Margaret and Leopold. It was plain she was informed of all that concerned him; but Margaret well knew, it was unavailing to ask her any questions, and for Leopold, it was a liberty that he had no inclination to take.

Leopold remained in his retreat till called to by the dame. The night before, with attentive care, he had replenished their fire, till even now the embers served to rekindle the fresh wood. During the day they conversed on various matters, Leopold exerting his utmost power to amuse them. At night he again went forth, and brought water and shell-fish, and then in painful expectation awaited the friar's coming.

The expectation was vain: the tedious hours elapsed, but Austin did not appear.

appear. Leopold and Alice, with heaviness of heart, surmised the cause, while Margaret, with equal anxiety, was distracted with a variety of different fears. Leopold viewed her at once with affection and pity, and seizing an opportunity, when she hastened to the narrow pass of the dreary dwelling, to hearken if she could discover the welcome sound of steps, said unto Alice —“ My good dame, with submission to your better judgment, I should think the lady Margaret would suffer less, knowing exactly what we expect, than left a prey unto a multiplicity of doubts, not one of which, but is perhaps worse than what we actually dread.”—As he spoke, Margaret returned: “I cannot bear this uncertainty,” said she; “perhaps our dear Austin has fallen a victim

to his friendship for the unfortunate Margaret."

"Your wounded fancy," answered Leopold, "magnifies the danger. 'Tis now the dead of night, and there is not the most distant fear of discovery; if, therefore, you will make yourself easy during the interval of my absence, I will hasten to his cell, and soon return with news."

"Oh! no, for pity do not leave us; you also may be way-laid and slain."

Alice, adopting the advice of Leopold, then informed Margaret of what they supposed the cause of Austin's absence, and also of his own wishes that such an event might take place.

Margaret heard her in silence; but as she concluded, exclaimed—"Oh, dame! if procuring wealth for me, is
to

to involve all those I love in ruin, I would rather never gain it. Let lady De Launcy take all, but leave me my friends, any injury to whom, not all the wealth of the domain could repay to my heart."

"There is," said Leopold, "no fear of personal danger: lord De Launcy will not venture to incur the displeasure of the Franciscans, by any but an open trial, which they will not fail to claim for our friend Austin."

Margaret made no reply but tears; and as the morning began to appear, Alice persuaded her to retire, which, weary with watching, and overwhelmed with sorrow, she at length consented to.

Leopold also retired; but remaining quiet until he surmised sleep might

have overpowered them, he, with the utmost caution left the mountain, and hastened to the cave. As usual he called on entering, but his own voice alone re-echoed a reply. Though aware of what he had to expect, his heart sunk at the thought of the man he so highly respected being in the power of wretches, whom, notwithstanding their wealth, he despised. Resolved, however, to use all means to be ascertained, he proceeded to David's cottage. A feeble light beamed from one of the casements, and tapping gently, Bridget soon opened the door. Leopold, informing her of his errand, she called David: grief was portrayed in every feature of the old man's face—"Holy Saints! why have you ventured hither? The tyrant usurpers of my late noble master's

master's domain, have seized on the virtuous father Austin, and have borne him to the tower in the castle. This event happened in the evening; and as there are several straggling parties, of four and five in each, I concluded it better to remain quiet, least there should be a watch kept upon me; and much do I grieve that you have ventured here, for it will be day before you can return."

"Think not of me," answered Leopold. "In the time of trial, the man who is selfish enough to feel personal fear, is unworthy the name of friend. At night, if it can be done with safety, let us see you, as I shall lose no time in informing the father Franciscans of the inthralment of our dear Austin."

"My good youth," replied David,

“ I am convinced you will act in all for the best—For the present, let me conjure you to hasten to your concealment; Heaven guide you there in safety ! But you are so tall, that it makes you as distinguishable from our country youths, as the stately elm is from the common brambles of the forest.”

Leopold, bidding him farewell, used his utmost speed, and cautiously observing that he was not watched, soon reached the mountain. As all was still, he threw himself upon his rushes, where, weary nature overpowered, he slept for some hours.

Margaret and Alice were both seated in silent expectancy, when Leopold joined them. He briefly related the events of the morning, and expressed his vexation at being so long overcome
with

with sleep. They trembled at the hazard he had run, and intreated him, in future, if not for his own, at least for their safety, not to venture from the mountain.

Margaret wept bitterly when she heard of the seizure of Austin, and regardless of being left with only Alice, entreated Leopold to lose no time, in hastening to inform the Franciscans of what had happened.

“ I only wait to see David, in order to learn if there is any circumstance yet unknown, to communicate to them,” replied Leopold. “ They are wise and good men, and I have no doubt of their warmest protection ; that point once gained, the sacred trust of conveying you to the care of the abbess of St. Mary’s, will employ all my thoughts.”

Leopold then observed, that overpowered with grief, they had eat nothing that day, and in the most pressing terms, conjured them to take some nourishment, least their strength failing, he should have the sorrow to see them reduced to sickness, in a place where he considered them from the reach of all human help.

The voice of affectionate kindness was not without effect ; from his hands both took sufficient to sustain nature ; the dame saying energetically, as he repeatedly pressed her to eat, “ How soothing to age is the attention of youth ; an hundred fold, my son, I pray Heaven, may thy cares of me be returned in thine own old age, by thy children and thy children’s children !”

“ My dear dame,” said Leopold,
raising

raising her hand respectfully to his lips, "you have given me a mother's prayer, and as such I will accept it."

As Leopold spoke, Margaret's dove flew from her shoulder to that of the youth, and nestled its head in his bosom—"Even my poor bird seems sensible of his mistress's obligations to you," said Margaret.

"I thought," replied he, "that the lady Margaret had honoured the peasant Leopold, by calling him her brother: Can there be obligations between such near relations?"

As he spoke, he kissed the dove, who instantly flew to Margaret, and picked her lip. Leopold's eyes met hers: a burning crimson dyed the cheeks of both. Leopold's bosom heaved a sigh: but endeavouring to suppress it, he con-

tinued—"Honoured by that title, obligation cannot subsist on any side, but that of the low-born youth, whom you favour with your notice."

The remainder of the day passed as the preceding, all wishing the appearance of night, in hopes it might bring David.

CHAP. VI.

THE morning after Austin had left the mountain, weary with fatigue he had retired to his cell, where he had slept till the day was far advanced. Rising, he had repaired to the chapel, to fulfil the usual duties; but fearful of creating suspicion, had forbidden David to join him there. Towards evening he again repaired to his cell. In his road thither he saw different parties of lord De Launcy's domestics, going and coming opposite ways, as he supposed, in pursuit of the lady Margaret.

Passing on without notice, he entered his dwelling, made his frugal meal, and

was seated in meditation, when the confused noise of voices struck him.

The day was nearly closed ; but not sufficiently so, but that objects were discernible. Lord De Launcy and his son he recognized at the head of several others, and advancing towards the cave, Richard called aloud—"Come forth, thou false priest, from thy dark lurking place, least we seek thee out with the point of our swords—"

Lord De Launcy ordered his son to be silent, and finding the friar made no answer, had no doubt he was fled.

"What, ho, friar Austin ; if you be here, speak," said he.

"What is your will ?" replied Austin, advancing towards them : "I am here, and ready, when called upon by men ; but

but petulant boys, I am not bound to answer."

"Friar," returned De Launcy, "further contest is useless. In the King's name I arrest you, of having conveyed away Margaret, base-born daughter of the late baron Fitzwalter, and expect you to answer the charge, before God and your countrymen."

"Before God and the King, my lord," replied Austin: "such is my determination, and I shall not relinquish it."

"Thee before the King," said Richard De Launcy scornfully, "What has the King to do with such as thee?"

"What has the King to do with such as *thee*?" repeated Austin. "I grieve thy tutors did their duty so ill, as not to

teach thee to pay more heed to the inspired Solomon; then would thou have remembered, that as a horse requires a whip, and a bridle is necessary for an ass; so is a rod for a fool's back."

"Audacious villain!" answered Richard, raising his hand to strike him.

"Strike me not, young man," replied Austin, seizing his arm, which he held down with a strength that Richard could not resist, "My vows will not suffer me to return a blow, or, behold, in my grasp, your body is as powerless as your mind."

Lord de Launcy, grieved to see his son thus humiliated before his dependants, advancing towards Austin, said, "Do you yield willingly, or must we use force?"

"Have you seen occasion for force?"

answered Austin : “ lead the way, I follow.” With these words, preceded by lord De Launcy, and followed by the domestics, Austin was conveyed to the hamlet, in his road to the castle. At about the mid-way, the cavalcade was met by a numerous company of men, women, and children, who, with mingled prayers, entreaties, threats, and cries, demanded the release of the good father. Great as was De Launcy’s power, he could not quiet the tumult : the demand was reiterated in the rough voices of the men, the softer tones of the women, and the shrill cries of the children. “ The kind father, who loves the poor, visits the sick, and comforts the dying, shall not go to prison,” said the men—“ The good friar, who restores peace in families—who bids men

love

love their wives, and tenderly cherish their children, shall not be torn from us," re-echoed the women—"Our dear father, who teaches us to pray, and walks with us over the mountains, if we are fearful at even, or have lost stray cattle, must not go away," cried the children.

Lord De Launcy, with some difficulty, at length obtained silence; and in a conversation mingled with threats against their disobedience, related the crime with which he accused the friar, concluded with assuring them, that if they did not immediately retire to their cottages, he would bereave them of their lands and dwellings, and turn them forth wanderers and vagabonds.

"Do so," replied one of the most hardy, "give us our good father, we will

will settle with him in a barren desert. God will not forsake the men who forfeit all for his faithful servant. Father Austin's holiness has protected him for sixteen years in a dreary cave, and under his guidance we fear nothing."

The contention, instead of subsiding, appeared to increase, when Austin advancing said—"My good friends, let me conjure you to retire to your respective homes, and there, with the prayers you put up for yourselves, mingle one for your father Austin—The God, whom you truly say, has protected me for so many years in the cave of St. Margaret, will not forsake me in the castle of Fitzwalter—No, in this cause, he will give me double support and resolution, and in his hand make me an humble instrument to preserve to this domain

domain its lawful successor. — I intreat you, let all take its course ; 'tis in vain for you to struggle, and you will grieve my heart if you persevere——Withdraw then, I charge you on my blessing, and be assured we shall meet again.”

A short consultation took place among the vassals, when all advancing nearer, one of the eldest said—

“ Your wisdom, father, sees more clearly than we can comprehend. If it be your will, we obey ; but first give us your blessing, and the Holy Virgin guard you !”

As they spoke, notwithstanding their numbers, they knelt round Austin, who raising his hands and eyes to heaven, prayed a blessing upon them ; then turning to De Launcy, he said—“ Lead
the

the way, my lord, I am ready to attend you."

They then proceeded to the castle, where the friar was conducted to the prison in the tower, and the door secured, left to himself.



As the night advanced, Margaret and her companions, with extreme impatience, waited the appearance of David, who, near the hour of midnight, joined them. Their meeting was mournful, and Margaret's first question was respecting Austin. David related all he knew, and the discontent of the vassals, observing, however, that he was not present, as the father had requested him, in case such an event took place, to particularly

particularly avoid being forward in the contest. David then produced his humble store of provisions, and promised Leopold to remain in the mountain, during the time he went to the Franciscans at Berwick—"Then, my good friend, you must tarry now," said he, "as I mean to depart before day: I can inform your wife to be under no uneasiness on your account."

"Not so," replied David, "I will myself hasten to her: in the interim, recruit your strength with food, and endeavour, though it be for a single hour, to sleep."

David then left them, but returned before the break of day; when, Leopold, bidding them farewell, set out on his journey.

On leaving them, he passed the mountains,

tains, and using his utmost speed, reached Berwick before noon, and presented Austin's letter to the fathers. They received him as an old friend, and making him take refreshment, listened to his story, promising to send a special messenger to the castle of Fitzwalter, to request proper usage for their brother; and also to send to London, and present a petition to the King, entreating that Austin might have his trial before him—The next concern was how to convey Margaret to Germany; on which business the fathers spoke largely of the charge intrusted to his care, and finally promised to engage a small vessel to convey them, as speedily as it could be done with safety. These points settled, Leopold promised to visit them again in the space of a few days,

days, and make the final arrangement; then, spite of their entreaties to the contrary, left them at the close of day.

Before midnight, Leopold reached his dreary habitation, and well acquainted with the entrance, unexpectedly presented himself before its inmates, who, in melancholy meditation, were seated round the fire, on huge masses of stone, the natural furniture of the dwelling. On his appearance, Margaret started, and advancing said warmly—"Welcome, my kind brother; how speedily you are returned. Surely you cannot have been to Berwick?"

"Indeed I have," replied Leopold, "and have transacted all the business that could now be arranged. The fathers would fain have persuaded me
to

to stay, but I was impatient to resume my charge."

Leopold then informed them of the event of his embassy, and entreating Margaret and Alice to retire to repose, he himself withdrew, and David returned to his cottage.

* * * * *

While the orphan was concealed in the mountain, and Austin confined in the prison of the castle, the mind of the lady De-Launcy was distracted with a thousand fears. For years her life had been a continued scene of successful enterprises and pleasures; at least, what she denominated such. The flight of Margaret, the persevering spirit of Austin, made her heart sink; and
though

though her pride forced her to assume an appearance of unconcern, yet she endured the greatest torment. Virtue may suffer, but its wounds are palliated by the soothing reflection that they are undeserved, and are but trials preparatory to a happier state ; while, on the contrary, those of vice are redoubled, by the cruel reflection, that the pangs here are but preliminary to the torments allotted to vice, sin, and shame hereafter. Lady De Launcy's internal feeling preyed upon her health, her appetite failed, her complexion faded, pleasure lost its attractions, and she almost wished that she had not been misled by the despicable passions of ambition and avarice. Lord De Launcy, accustomed to transact the intricate business attendant on courts, felt less ; he presumed his

his own interest and skill in all causes of controversy, backed by the favour of the monarch, could not fail to determine the event to his satisfaction.

In the prison of the castle, Austin was calm: Jaques daily brought him food, and he had been too long accustomed to abstinence, to find any hardship in that allotted him.

On the day appointed by the father Franciscans, one of the superiors of the order, waited on lord De Launcy. He made no complaint against the imprisonment of the friar, but simply requested he might be treated with the respect due to him, declined entering into any altercation concerning the orphan; and finally, informed De Launcy, that he had sent a messenger to London, to petition the King himself to be judge in the cause; concluding
with

with a demand to be admitted to see the prisoner—Disagreeable as such a request was, lord De Launcy did not dare refuse the visit to a spiritual director, and therefore ordered Jaques to conduct the father to Austin.

Intirely acquainted with all that appertained to himself and the orphan, Austin recommended her in the warmest manner to the brother, entreating him to lose no time in causing her to be removed, under the conduct of Alice and Leopold, to Germany.

After about an hour's conversation on the subject, they separated, the brother departing for Berwick, leaving lady De Launcy's mind in a state of increased agitation, and her husband's not entirely without uneasiness.

* * * * *

David,

David, who was carefully observant of all that passed, soon learnt that the father Franciscan had been at the castle, and did not fail to communicate it to Leopold, who determined to repair again to Berwick, to learn the result. In two days after he departed thither, and obtained the wished intelligence, that in a week, a small vessel would be prepared to take them to Germany. The only difficulty that now remained, was how to convey the women to Berwick; for though a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles appeared nothing to Leopold, he was well aware it would be highly inconvenient to them, particularly to Alice. On his return, conversing on the subject with David, he observed, that he could borrow an old horse of a peasant in the hamlet, and

by keeping it three or four days, take off suspicion of the use for which it was designed. This plan meeting general concurrence, David did not fail to execute it; and though the hours passed heavily, the time approached when they were to leave the mountain. The diligent pursuit that had been made for Margaret began to slacken, and resolved to lose no time, David was appointed to attend with the horse at his usual hour, two nights after the final arrangement.

At length the expected time arrived; David was ready, Alice and Margaret, under the escort of Leopold, left the mountain, and by the sea-shore joined the faithful old domestic. A thousand times did he bless them, and pray that Heaven might only lengthen his days,

to see his beloved young lady return, the acknowledged mistress of the domain: Alice tenderly shook him by the hand, and he entreated to kiss that of Margaret.—“Not so, my friend,” answered she, “you have loved me as your child, part with me as such, and as such, if Heaven grant, will we meet again.”

Before he could reply, with a condescending kindness, that in Leopold's eyes raised her almost above mortality, she took the old man by the hand, and approaching her coral lips, imprinted a kiss on his brown and weather-beaten cheek.

“Holy Saints protect thee! mild and unassuming angel,” exclaimed the old man; “should we ever see happier
G 2 days,

days, how will the proud David remember this honoured salute."

"'Tis a worthless bribe, David," said she. "In my absence you must take charge of my dove: the dame says we shall kill or lose it, if we attempt to take it with us; on my return, I will claim it by the same token."

As David received the dove, he replied—"Your cheerfulness bodes good. Bridget will cherish your bird, as tenderly as she would an infant."

Leopold then hastened them to depart; Margaret peremptorily insisting on Alice riding first, the dame was forced to acquiesce, though she declared she would only take her turn with Margaret.

At length they departed, their small
bundle

Bundle of clothes, tied upon the horse, behind the dame, and Margaret leaning upon the arm of Leopold. The night was dark and the way rugged, and Leopold, who had never before thought it long or inconvenient, felt it both, on account of Margaret, who, though she affected cheerfulness, had not proceeded above five miles, when she found herself fatigued. In the interim, Alice had repeatedly pressed her to take her place, which she obstinately refused, until the dame declared, that if she would not, she would also walk. Margaret thus pressed took her seat, but for only a few miles, when she again resigned it.

In this friendly altercation, they at length reached Berwick, where Leo-

pold leaving them at a small house of entertainment, repaired to the Franciscans. The fathers informed him they had engaged a small vessel, which lay on the coast expecting them, at a distance of three miles. They then repeated their cautions respecting his conduct, gave him a letter to the Abbess, and finally presenting him with a small sum, dismissed him. Leopold hastened to his friends, and after taking some refreshment, hired horses to carry them to where the vessel lay at anchor; for though they much needed repose, they were so fearful of discovery, that they resolved to protract it till they got on ship-board. The old horse, which David had borrowed, Leopold ordered to be kept for three days, and then sent home,

home, leaving money to defray the expense; and all arranged, on the same evening they embarked.

The whole crew of the vessel consisted of six men and a boy; but by order of the fathers, all was furnished with a convenience, befitting the persons it was to convey.

For some days the wind being fair, Margaret was delighted with the voyage: the remembrance alone of Austin saddened her satisfaction, as it did also that of Leopold and Alice. The fifth day, the wind suddenly shifting, the sea became agitated; and an approaching tempest was prognosticated by the sailors. For two days it, however, only threatened, without other damage than preventing their progress; but on the third, the sea swelled fearfully, the sky became

G 4

cloudy,

cloudy, the thunder, tremendous to hear, rolled over them, and the lightning, yet more tremendous to behold, at intervals enlightened with livid flame the wide expanse of the darkened heavens. The little vessel, unable to resist the storm, became, as it were, the sport of the waves; the cordage was rent with the force of the wind, and the lightning striking the mast, shivered it to pieces; and to complete their misfortune, the vessel sprung a leak, which required the utmost exertion to be kept under. In this disastrous state, among the most active was Leopold, assisting in the most laborious exertions to save the ship; and if a moment intervened, running to Alice and Margaret, and entreating them to support their spirits.

“ Alas !” said Margaret, “ I involve
all

all my friends in ruin:—father Austin suffers through me; and now, my dear dame; and you, Leopold, will, I fear, perish with me.”

“Would I alone might perish to save you,” replied Leopold warmly.

“My aged life is of no value,” said Alice; “and whether I attain the great end for which we were all created, by water or by land, by sickness or other visitation of God, is immaterial: but though I am convinced his wisdom in all knows best, yet to see the child so dear to me, and the generous youth who has ventured so much for her, at the point of being buried in this world of waters, pierces my heart, and woe to say, withdraws my mind from that preparation we should all make at so awful a juncture.”

“Think not of me,” replied Leopold. “If I cannot save you, my dear friends, to perish with you is all I have to wish.—Let me, however, entreat you not to give way to despondence; the fury of the storm must, I trust, be soon exhausted, and though we are in danger, yet let us not be without hope.”

“But for me,” said Margaret, “my dear dame would have laid her honoured head in consecrated ground, and at her last hour have received the pious cares of the holy church:—but for me, you, Leopold, might have lived as you deserve, respected and honoured, and died in old age, surrounded by your friends and children.—Oh, blessed Heaven!” exclaimed she, “save my friends, and join the unfortunate Margaret to her
parents.”

parents.—Preserve my honoured father Austin from the baseness of his enemies; and over my beloved Isabel stretch thy protecting wings; and as in her will center the name, honours, and fortune of the family of Fitzwalter, so in her may center all its virtues.”

“Thy example, Margaret, is worthy imitation,” said the dame. “Let us pray, it will calm our spirits; and should the mortal stroke fall, at least it will find as properly employed.”

“Do so,” said Leopold. “For me, with the highest veneration for religion; I cannot at this moment stay; for my assistance by this time is again necessary: one of the sailors but relieved me at the pump.”

Leopold then left them, and found all in confusion among the small crew.

The water had gained considerably upon them, and weary with unsuccessful exertions, they began to suffer despair to overwhelm them. In vain the master entreated them to use their endeavours, they peremptorily refused.—“Where is the use to labour?” said they: “we may as well sink sitting still, as struggling to effect what is impossible; the storm appears rather to increase than abate.”

“Fie on ye,” said Leopold, “are ye men and speak thus? Surely it is more worthy to die nobly striving against adversity, than sinking like cowards under it! Ye are all, except the lad, beyond your boyish days, and yet you make a youth like me blush for your weakness. Some of you, perhaps all, have wives, children, aged parents, and
homes

homes rendered dear to you by a thousand tender remembrances, and yet you coldly give them up, rather than exert yourselves a little longer.—Behold me, I am alone in the world—I have no father to weep for me,—no brother to lament my fate,—no pious mother, or sister, to offer prayers for my soul's repose ; and yet I am willing to labour, till overcome with fatigue, I drop in the exertion for our mutual preservation.—Come, then, resume your courage a little longer, and if I fail, be the first to reproach me,—proclaim me coward, sluggard, and vain-boaster, and may the name rest on me for ever.”

“ Generous youth !” said the master of the vessel, “ the spirit of Heaven animates you ; seconded by you, we
will,

will, if all others refuse, struggle together: the God who gave so noble a heart as beats in your bosom, will not suffer it to sink in this tempest."

"I am ready," replied Leopold: then turning to the sailors, he added, —"Think, my friends, you see your wives and children hold out their hands to entreat you to save your lives for their sake;—their bread, their very existence depend on you; a few hours hard labour may, perhaps, overcome the danger, and our little vessel refitted, you may reach your native land in safety, and again receive the warm welcome of affection: your children may again climb your knees, while your wives in transport bless Heaven, for giving them husbands capable of such perseverance in the hour of calamity.

mity.—Come then; as the danger is general, so be the honour:—what say ye, will you not join us?”

“ In life and death,” exclaimed the men. “ We will save the vessel, or perish in the struggle.”

“ Bravely resolved,” replied Leopold: “ be assured you will speedily see the effect of our labours.”

The storm continued with the utmost violence; and, in spite of all their endeavours, they could not keep the water sufficiently under to consider themselves secure. It had, however, decreased since their united efforts, and that discovery, in some measure, preserved them from despondence. Leopold, seizing an interval, when he was relieved, hastened to the cabin, where he found both Alice and Margaret seated

seated on the floor; for unable, from the beating of the vessel, to keep their chairs, they had taken that precaution. Margaret's arms were clasped round Alice, who supported her head on her bosom.—“ My beloved friends,” said Leopold, throwing himself by them, with an emotion he could not repress, and encircling them in his arms, “ Raise your depressed spirits; the danger is decreased, and, as the sailors now exert themselves to the uttermost, I entertain the most lively hope, that in a few hours we shall be safe.”

Margaret, raising her head, replied, —“ Kind and considerate Leopold, do not attempt to deceive us. I have thought your absence long, and rejoice to see you once more.—Give me your hand,” continued she, “ I have

have that of the dame; thus united we will all die together."

Leopold took Margaret's offered hand, and raised it to his lips. For a moment he was unable to reply; but at length, though with a hesitating voice, he answered—"Believe me, the danger is indeed lessened."

"If the danger is decreased," replied Margaret, raising her eyes to his face, "why do you even tremble? Leopold is not a man to tremble without danger."

"On my life, my alarm respecting the storm has greatly subsided," answered he.

"What then do you fear? for you are visibly agitated. Why will you not tell us?—Is not the dame your mother,
and

and am not I your sister, and do we not both esteem and love you?"

"I fear myself," answered he, taking his arm from round the waist of Margaret, and hastily rising—"I fear not performing the charge intrusted me by father Austin, with that unblemished rectitude I could wish."

"Ah!" returned Margaret, "who would have performed it with such indefatigable care as you have done? If we escape this storm, to you we shall owe it, as an hour since the captain told us; and if we sink, you have only yielded your charge with your life."

"'Tis time I relieved my comrades," answered he in a hurried accent—"I will be with you again when I have a respite from labour."

"Good

“Good youth, how truly estimable is thy character,” said Margaret after he left them;—“but you do not speak, my dear dame: the danger surely lessens, for Leopold is no deceiver.”

“I think not; and I pray that he may guess truly—I would we had never been driven to give him such trouble.”

“So do I, dame; but yet I am pleased that we knew him. Had Heaven given me a brother, he would perhaps have been brave like Leopold, and yet I think I could scarcely have loved him better.”



The storm had lasted the whole night and day with unabated rigour, and surrounded by a heavy fog, and
driven

driven by contrary winds, the captain concluded his vessel could not be a great distance from the coast of Denmark, but was unable to form any exact judgment; for though the storm subsided toward evening, a night, horrible from its darkness, succeeded. Not a star beamed to give them hope; yet Leopold was not to be discouraged, he continued his exertions, and by his example and words so excited the sailors, that before dawn the water was considerably lowered in the hold.

In the morning, when the first streaks of light began to appear, Leopold anxiously looked for land. To his great satisfaction, the sun, though feeble, began to shine, and though as yet he could discover no track, he was in hopes
that,

that, before evening, that desirable event would take place.

About noon, as he was busily employed at the pump, the welcome cry of "*land! land!*" struck his ear; and, relinquishing for a short period his work, his eyes verified what his ear had heard.—Running to Margaret's cabin he rushed in—"Congratulate me," cried he in a transport of joy, "the coast of Denmark is in sight; you will in a few hours be in safety, and Leopold will be preserved from the most cruel of all sorrows, that of seeing his friends perish."

"Ever welcome," answered Margaret, "but now doubly so, for you bring the most delightful tidings that ever yet gladdened my heart.—My dear dame will be saved, and I shall

not

not plunge you, Leopold, into an untimely grave."

Alice joined her congratulations with those of Margaret, and Leopold, still attentive to his labours, soon after left them.

CHAP. VII.

TOWARD the evening, which was clear, they made the coast of Denmark, but in a spot so uncultivated and savage, that they rather rejoiced than grieved at meeting with no inhabitants. Seeking out the safest part of the coast they cast anchor, and in a few hours made shift to stop the leak that had caused them such uneasiness.

It was now that all required rest, and relieving each other by turns, they soon succeeded in alleviating, if not at once overcoming the fatigue they had endured.

The succeeding day the sailors began to refit the vessel, in order to enable
her

her to continue her voyage, and on the evening, resting from their labours, regardless of the past danger, they sung, joked, and laughed, with the blunt simplicity of honest seamen. Leopold walked on the deck with Alice and Margaret, where the captain joining them, related, much to the confusion of Leopold, how greatly he was obliged to his exertions, adding, that but for his conduct and perseverance, the vessel had undoubtedly been lost.

After a week of hard labour, the captain thought the vessel equal to continue its way, and the wind proving favourable, after a pleasant voyage they reached Embden.

As the vessel was engaged by the Franciscans, the master refused any gratuity from Leopold, who, however,
before

before he left the ship, in the lady Margaret's name, presented the sailors with money.—“ My friends,” said he, “ before we part, as most, or indeed all of you, are fixed for life to gain an existence at sea, let me entreat you, from the wonderful escape we have had, never to lose your courage nor presence of mind. You have witnessed the fruits of activity and perseverance, and now my prediction will be verified; you will soon return to your native land—In the embraces of your wives and children, may you forget your danger, or if remembered, may you only recollect it, as a spur to prove of what exertion sailors are capable.”—As he concluded, he shook each by the hand, and bade them farewell.

Giving a night to repose, they proceeded in their way to Bremen.

Notwithstanding Leopold had now fulfilled the task allotted him by the lady Abbess and father Austin, yet his heart was by no means at ease, and though he exerted his utmost endeavours, he could not conceal the oppression that hung over him. Margaret also was not more cheerful. Her mother's death in that country cast a gloom on her spirits, and when she spoke of parting with Leopold she sighed involuntarily. Alice dropped a tear when she reflected on the death of Blanch, revived in her memory by the scenes around her: the remembrance alone of the Abbess appeared to give her pleasure, and recommending to Margaret to regard her as a model of human

human perfection, she became lavish in her praise.

“ My dear dame,” said Margaret, “ pardon me, but you speak of the Abbess as of one whom you well know ; I before comprehended you were scarcely acquainted.”

“ I know her well,” replied Alice, “ though many years have elapsed since we met. She was then, at once, the most pious and lovely woman my eyes ever beheld ; her beauty has, doubtless, faded, but her heart is evidently the same.”

Conversing thus, as they travelled slowly on their mules, they, after a pleasant journey, reached Bremen, when they immediately repaired to St. Mary's. As they approached, neither Margaret nor Leopold appeared in-

clined to converse, and, on reaching the gates, the youth's agitation was so great, that he had scarcely power to lift Margaret from her mule. Announced at the grate, they were instantly shewn into the parlour, where they were at first received by the sister Clarice, and in a few minutes after by the Abbess.

All that Margaret had before heard of the latter, appeared now poor and cold praise; so much in her opinion did Adelaide surpass all the women she had yet seen. On receiving Margaret she pressed her in her arms, and for some minutes wept bitterly; then turning to the dame, she said,—“ My good Alice, I rejoice to see you, many sorrows have passed over both our heads since last we met, but I trust they have been salutary punishments; for attached
to

to worldly objects, we might otherways have fixed our happiness here, instead of hereafter.——My fair Margaret you are welcome ; if your face bespeaks you truly, then will you indeed be dear to me.—”

“ Amidst these congratulations,” interrupted Clarice, “ you forget the youth to whom this meeting is due : speak to him, I conjure you ; he merits the utmost attention.”

The Abbess, approached Leopold, “ My good youth,” said she, “ how shall we repay all the obligations we owe you ? Father Austin has shewn his trust in you by choosing you for this office.”

Leopold then presented the letter from the Franciscans. “ Father Austin,” said she, “ hath not written then ?

I hoped to have received a letter from one of whose virtue I have so frequently heard honourable mention."

Leopold informed her, that the friar was in confinement, and consequently incapable of writing; and Alice, in few words, related the sorrow that had reduced them to seek refuge in flight.

In the mean time Margaret looked anxiously round. "Pardon me," said she timidly, "but has my dear Isabel left you?"

"No," answered the Abbess, "the good girl is still with us; she shall instantly be called: her heart has suffered many anxious hours on your account, therefore speak of the oppression you have suffered from her mother, as tenderly as the subject will permit."

"Though lady De Launcy," replied

replied Margaret, "hates me, I hope I shall never forget she was my father's wife, and is the mother of Isabel."

"Soaring above being biased by the paltry consideration of a division of wealth," returned the Abbess, "yourself and Isabel will, I trust, be ever united in the strictest bond of sisterly affection."

"I wish no division," interrupted Margaret, "I require only to be, without shame, acknowledged her lawful sister."

"And you are so," said the Abbess: "she is content to be considered Fitzwalter's youngest daughter."

At that instant Isabel, who had been called, though not informed on what occasion, entered. She gazed round her for a minute, as if she doubted the

evidence of her senses, until Margaret certified what she had almost thought impossible, by clasping her in her arms, and exclaiming—"My beloved Isabel! do you not know me?"

"My sister,—my Margaret,—is it indeed you?" replied Isabel. "Methought the happiness was too great to be real.—My dame, too?—This surely is no dream?—My dear, dear mother, receive and bless your child?"

Alice threw her arms round her, and repeatedly blessed her.

"But you come from home?"—after a pause, said Isabel, "How doth my mother?—Is she in Northumberland?—I trust the lord De Launcy doth not forget what is due to her?"

"I think not, my sweet child," replied Alice; "their hearts appear in unison,

unison, and that alone can render the marriage state happy."

"Thank God,—thank God!" repeated Isabel emphatically—"My mother may have faults, but they are not to be remembered by her child."

"Nor by her daughter-in-law," added Margaret warmly.

"Thank ye, sweet sister," said Isabel, kissing her cheek.—"I dread to ask; but happiness has not brought you here, I fear?"

"There is not time to talk on those subjects now," said the Abbess; "retire into the inner apartment, where you may converse at leisure.—I have business with our young friend here; that concluded, I will join you."

In the pleasure of meeting Isabel, Margaret had almost forgotten Leo-

pold ; but thus recalled to recollection, she turned her eyes toward him. His face was alternately pale and flushed with crimson, and though his lips moved, no sound passed them.

“ My dear youth,” said Alice, advancing towards him, “ I trust we shall meet in happier days, till when, be assured the warmest recollection of your attentive kindness will dwell in our hearts. The Abbess will doubtless know where you are placed, and from her we shall learn of your health.” Leopold, endeavouring to recover his confusion, answered—“ My destination, my good dame, is England, and whatever fate attends me, be assured that the remembrance of my virtuous and noble friends in Germany, will
never

never leave my memory but with my life."

"To England," repeated Margaret faltering; "and wherefore, I pray you, to England? Surely it is better you remain here, where you have friends to defend you from oppression."

"But who, gentle lady, shall defend the generous Austin? He honours me with the name of son, and I love him as a father.—His first commands were to see you safely here.—That command is fulfilled," added he with a sigh, "and now duty and affection bear me back to him. I also am empowered to request of the lady Adélaide, to be intrusted, once more, with the confession of the lady Blanch Fitzwalter."

"Exemplary young man," said the Abbess; "your piety, even in this

world, will not, I trust, be unrewarded. Repose yourself a few days, and then act as your heart shall direct; but remember I have business for your private ear before you depart. You will also bid Alice and Margaret farewell."

"We shall then, Leopold, meet again," said Margaret. "Take care of your health; remember, it is but a short time since you were ill at Berwick. Indeed you are too regardless of yourself, to suffer your friends to be happy in your absence."

As Margaret spoke, she extended her hand to Leopold. He received it with trepidation, and raised it without reply to his lips; but his eyes meeting hers, he observed they were bathed in tears.

"We will see you to-morrow at the
hour

hour of noon," said the Abbess, "if your convenience suits: for the present I would speak to you alone."

Thus reminded, Alice took Margaret's hand, as did also Isabel, and retired into the convent.

Leopold was no sooner alone with the ladies Adelaide and Clarice, than the first addressing him, said—"My nephew Ferdinand has been under the utmost anxiety on your account; from him I have learned the contention between the count and yourself. My brother, unhappily, for some years, has been subject to attacks, that his friends fear betray strong symptoms of a disordered imagination. We mutually grieved, that you should undertake the voyage to England so illprovided; but that debt you will suffer us to discharge,

at

at least the pecuniary part ; for the rest we must remain your debtor."

Leopold modestly thanked her, informed her that he had still money remaining from what he received from the Franciscans, and begged to decline her offer.

"I must not be refused," replied the Abbess. "You are yourself so ready to confer favours, that you should learn in your turn, sometimes, to be obliged. If you refuse from pride, it is a sin, and root it from your heart ; if from modesty, which I believe, remember a gift from a nun is but as a bequest from the dead, who give what they have no longer occasion for.—Take, then, this purse, and with it my ring ; they go together, tokens of my friendship and future remembrance."

Leopold

Leopold could no longer refuse ; he received the present of the Abbess, and was preparing to take his leave, when she said,—“ I am convinced you wish to see Ferdinand. His father's mind is unhappily still in a disordered state ; send him, therefore, notice of your arrival, it will be preferable to going to the Castle of De Hoffman. In the mean time, provide yourself with apparel befitting your own deserts, and the friends who patronize you. Repair to England, if you deem it best ; but your business done there, on myself I take the care of your future fortune.

She then bade Leopold farewell, as did also Clarice, requesting him to come again on the ensuing morning.

CHAP. VIII.

WHEN the Abbess found herself alone with Clarice, "How happy," said she, "must the mother be, who can call such a youth her son, and grow old amidst his children—How many painful remembrances does his appearance recal to my memory."

"Banish them," replied Clarice, "you and I, Adelaide, look forward to a happier state—Give not way, then, I conjure you, to reflections on the past; they rend any heart, particularly when I reflect, that I am the occasion of your sorrow."

"Not so," answered Adelaide, "my misfortunes had been equally severe, though

though you had never been born.—

But away with selfish grief; this orphan daughter of Fitzwalters claims all my attention.—From Alice we shall learn her true situation; let us seek her, the sisters will be well engaged alone.”

Enquiring of a nun, they were informed that the strangers were in the chapel with Isabel, they therefore walked thither, and found them rising from their knees at the tomb of Blanch. The eyes of all were red with tears; but by degrees recovering their composure, they entered into a friendly converse with the Abbess, until at length she said, “I rejoice, my sweet girls, to see the affection that unites you. For a time we will leave you to your mutual communications, while myself and my sister retire with dame Alice, whom
I wish

I wish to converse with alone—In half an hour we shall be glad you would join us.”

So saying, they left Margaret and Isabel, and went to the lady Adelaide's chamber, when Alice related minutely every circumstance that had happened to Margaret, the friendship of Austin, and the perseverance of Leopold to release her from the power of De Launcy.

“He is, indeed, a most extraordinary youth,” replied Clarice. “My nephew, Ferdinand, represents him as courageous and indefatigable in whatever he undertakes; and that character appears not more than he merits. I grieve that the count De Hoffman has taken a dislike to him.”

“The dislike is unfounded and unjust,” answered Adelaide. “He can find

find no reason to qualify his conduct, and therefore it can only, in charity, be attributed to an occasional defect in his understanding, which I pray Heaven to remedy."

"Amen!" returned Clarice; "but I grieve to say, that my family throws back from them the blessings that Heaven offers."

"Say not all," replied Adelaide. "Look at Ferdinand; I know not a more deserving youth. He appears warmly attached to Isabel, and though I do not seem to notice it, I wish from my heart it may be permanent. I know not a more excellent heart than conceals itself under the playfulness of her exterior."

"From her very birth," said Alice, "she was the same. I once foolishly thought,

thought, that I could not love a child of lord Fitzwalter's by a second marriage; but that dear girl has forced me to retract my opinion."

While they were thus conversing, Margaret and Isabel were engaged in relating to each other, whatever had happened in their long separation. The first, softening all wherein lady De Launcy had a part, informed her sister of the occurrences that had combined to render her stay in Northumberland distressing, and reduced her to seek safety from persecution in flight. When she spoke of what Austin was suffering on her account, they mingled their tears; but when the discourse recurred to Leopold, Margaret's face glowed with blushes; and though she longed to be lavish in his praise, a sentiment, which

which she could not express, withheld her.

“ I grieve,” said Isabel, as she concluded, “ that these disagreeable events have happened. Why, my sister, will they endeavour to sow division between us? We have no separate interest; and that the world shall witness. I am in hourly expectation, that my mother will send for me home, as the daughter of the count De Ranstade has been gone some time; but of this be assured, that nothing shall ever make me consent to give my hand to Richard De Launcy.”

At the time the Abbess had appointed, the sisters joined her; and in the evening, Ferdinand De Hoffman came to the grate, to pay his duty to his aunts. He informed them, that he had received a private message from Leopold,

pold, and in consequence had seen him: —“ I grieve,” said he warmly, “ not having it in my power to offer that youth my home. To go with him to England, would gratify me highly; but I dare not propose it to my father, whose discontent and gloom, I think, increase daily. I shall not even mention Leopold's return; for I am convinced, that against him the Count bears the most invincible hatred.”

Isabel conversed with Ferdinand with ease and familiarity: she introduced him to Margaret as to her elder sister, and to Alice as to her adopted mother. From Leopold's story, they were prepared to esteem him, and his appearance and manners justified the encomium they had heard. He related to his aunts the high character Leopold had

had given him of friar Austin, and expressed the warmest desire to be acquainted with so good a man. Leopold had spoken of his virtues and his melancholy; but as to the remarks he had made, respecting the effect that even the name of the Abbess had upon him, he regarded that as an observation he had no right to communicate even to his dearest friend. The open-hearted Isabel had before related all she knew, and the combined accounts interested both Adelaide and Clarice in his sorrows.

“Isabel,” said the Abbess, “tells me, that from what she has ever heard, no doubt is entertained but the friar is of high rank, though he conceals it. Alas! who knows what dreadful misfortunes may have reduced him to such a severity

a severity of life.—You, dame Alice, were most acquainted with the baron Fitzwalter's attachments; do you know the family of this good man?"

"Pardon me, lady," replied Alice, "my dear departed lord entrusted his faithful servant David and me only with the secret; and that rather from necessity than choice—I am not, therefore, at liberty to disclose it."

"Worthy dame," answered the Abbess, "the partiality of Fitzwalter for you, did honour to his discernment. Heaven forbid I should wish you to disclose a secret intrusted to you."

"It was strictly enjoined me on oath," returned Alice, "or believe me, lady, there is nothing I would withhold from you."

"I do believe it, and am satisfied;
and

and can only pray, that whosoever he be, the Virgin may relieve and soften his sorrows."

"I thank you for him: that is all we have to hope, for happiness is torn from him for ever—"

"I grieve for it," replied Adelaide. "Like myself, his name appears to have been written in the sour book of misfortune."

Clarice, who was ever cautious of her sister's referring to painful remembrances, changed the subject by addressing Ferdinand, who, after some conversation, retired, though not till he had twice received his aunt's request to that purpose.

CHAP. IX.

THE interview between Ferdinand and Leopold had been as that of affectionate brothers long separated. Ferdinand related all that had happened in his absence; and in return, received from Leopold an account of whatever had befallen himself since his departure, and also his intention of returning immediately to England. “Oh, my friend!” said he, “I shame to tell you all my weakness, and to what a point my bold presumptuous heart has misled me. In your bosom I will deposit my frailties, and then endeavour to forget them; though, alas! I fear the effort will be unavailing.—Beggar that I am,

am, I could not see and know Margaret Fitzwalter, without a sentiment, which, however new to my heart, I am convinced is love. Her beauty is her smallest endowment. Her mildness, her affectionate solicitude for her friends, her patience, all conspire to raise her in my eyes above every woman I have yet seen, except the lady Adelaide; and as fortune has placed her so high, and me so low, there remains but one alternative, which is, to seek in absence a forgetfulness of what, had I been blessed with birth and wealth, might have constituted my greatest earthly felicity.—Oh, Ferdinand! you know not what I have suffered to see her in danger. To feel as I did, during the storm, the pressure of her soft hand; I must have been more than man not to

have loved her.—Yet, Ferdinand, I will never forget what is due to her, and will rather perish, than act unworthy the trust reposed in me.”

“Leopold,” answered Ferdinand, “brothers in affection, we are brothers by another tie; Margaret cannot be dearer to your heart, than is her sister to mine.—I will not, though there are many obstacles, despair; and should I be successful, if with my fortune, and their wealth, we cannot furnish enough for thee, thou art more unconscionable than I have hitherto believed thee.”

“Generous Ferdinand! your friendship misleads you, and for a moment makes you forget, it is to the son of Nicholas Sternheim you are speaking.—No, never will I bring disgrace on the woman I love.—By your interest,
and

and that of your noble family, the utmost I aspire to, is to gain honour in the service of my country."

They conversed more on the subject, but to the same purport, and at length separated, promising to meet the ensuing evening.

* * * * *

The next morning Leopold was true to the time appointed by the lady Adelaide. He was newly cloathed, in a vest, doublet, and cloak of fine woollen cloth, a hat and feather, and by his side a sword, rather for use than shew. The ladies Adelaide and Clarice received him kindly, both uniting in pressing him to accept a sum, sufficient not only

to defray his expenses to England, but also, if need were, to support and enable Austin to fulfil his design, in bringing forward the proof of Margaret's legitimacy. This motive was too powerful to be refused, Leopold therefore accepted the charge; the lady Adelaide adding, "You will also bear to the father our good wishes, and tell him, that should all other means fail, I will interest the Pope in his favour: we are nearly related, and his holiness will, I am convinced, not see so good a man oppressed, for his generous protection of an helpless orphan."

The Abbess then gave him the confession of the lady Blanch Fitzwalter, carefully sealed up, and directed to Austin, then wishing him a successful voyage she retired, saying, they would
 send

send Alice and the sisters to bid him farewell.

Margaret, on their entrance, did not speak ; but her features testified a concern for his departure, far more flattering than words. Isabel first addressed him—" You are once more bound for England," said she, " Heaven prosper you in all where *I* with duty may wish it. — Bear my affectionate regards to father Austin, and tell him, though so long absent, I must not be forgotten."

" The memory of father Austin is not yet so defective as to suffer him to forget so fair a maid," returned Leopold, " I will, however, convey your message truly.—For myself, I hope my duty will never call me where it can interfere with yours, as I then should feel reluctance in performing it."

"I have nothing, my dear youth, to repeat, but a blessing on you," said Alice. "Heaven guide your steps, and fulfil your wishes! shall be my constant prayer till we meet again."

"That Heaven may guide my steps I equally pray," replied Leopold; "but for my wishes, dame, they do not, perhaps, merit to be fulfilled."

"Then your understanding and piety will enable you to overcome them," said she. "Peace and comfort rest on you: I part from you, methinks, as I should have done from a son, had I been blessed with one."

Leopold kissed her hand, and advancing towards Margaret, he added, "For you, my lovely sister, for I will at this moment profit by the honour you have done me by that name, I believe
I know

I know all that you have to say to the friar. I will tell him your anxiety on his account; the uneasiness of your voyage; and to console him for the unpleasant commencement of my narrative, conclude with informing him, that I left you well and happy, under the protection of the lady Adelaide.

“Happy,” repeated Margaret, “how can I be happy, while the good father and you are so perplexed on my account? Do you, Leopold, think so little of the danger of your friends, as to judge they can be so unmindful of yours?”

“Nay,” interrupted Alice, “I pray ye let us part at once; it is courting pain to prolong it thus.”

“Farewell then, Leopold—brother—friend—protector,”—said Margaret.

“ I will not say a prayer without remembering you.”

“ If the prayers of angels are acceptable before the throne of mercy, yours will not fail of their effect,” replied Leopold.—“ Farewell, most gentle and best of women. May Heaven guard you, and grant to Leopold the blessing of seeing you placed in peace and happiness.”

As he spoke, in haste to conceal the confusion that overpowered him, he rushed from the apartment and left the convent.

Margaret threw herself into a chair, and gave way to her tears, till called to recollection by Alice, and the affectionate caresses of Isabel. Her spirits somewhat relieved, she endeavoured to enter into discourse with them ; but
her

her answers were contrary, and her observations vague.

“How strikingly Leopold resembles Ferdinand De Hoffman,” said Isabel. “To-day, that he is more properly cloathed, the likeness is astonishing: his voice too is so similar, that I scarcely knew a difference.”

“Their height and port are the same,” replied Alice, “nor are their features unlike.”

“It is so obvious,” added Isabel, “that when I mentioned it to sister Clarice, she informed me, that the Abbess and herself had noticed it. I never yet but once saw the count De Hoffman, and much do I wonder how my father could love that man. Had he, indeed, been like Ferdinand, no one could have been astonished at his partiality ;

tiality ; but for the count, he is one of the most disagreeable men I ever saw."

"He was not always thus," answered Alice, "I remember few more agreeable. A severe mental derangement preys upon his spirits, and we should rather pity than condemn him."

"He hates Leopold," said Margaret, shaking off her stupor, "and therefore cannot be a good man. I grieve my father was so mistaken in his character."



Leopold, though he wished to have departed immediately for England, was necessitated to defer his intention for some days, as he could not procure a vessel. During the time, having informed his friends at St. Mary's of his

disap-

disappointment, he obtained permission to see them every evening, and also had daily private interviews with Ferdinand. At length the time appointed for sailing arrived, and having taken leave, he left Bremen privately; joined the vessel, and with a fair wind set sail once more for England, in a ship bound to Hull.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

THE count De Hoffman's malady, or what was denominated such, had arisen to so great a height, that he was not only a torment to himself but to all around him, and nothing but the attentive duty of Ferdinand could have enabled him to bear the perpetual bitterness and petulance of his father's temper. He shut himself up, at times, for hours alone ; at others would not suffer his son to quit him, and more than once had endeavoured to obtain an oath from him that he would relinquish all communication with Leopold ; but that the youth had refused with the most determined spirit. Leopold's return had
not,

not, however, met his knowledge, till the very morning before his departure, when he learned it from one of his domestics, whom he employed as a spy on his son's conduct.

By dint of enquiries, the lackey obtained information that Leopold had brought over the lady Margaret and dame Alice, that he was highly in the favour of the Abbess, and suffered to pay his respects most evenings at the grate of the convent. This intelligence communicated to the count, his rage knew no bounds. A thousand curses did he bestow on Clarice and Adelaide, though he did not choose openly to vent his displeasure in their presence, nor yet to require them to give up the youth, whose interest they had espoused; indeed he well knew the re-

quest

quest would be unavailing, unless he could convince them of his unworthiness, and that being impossible, his anger against them could only be vented in fruitless rage.

Adelaide ever treated the count with kindness and attention, but their characters were too dissimilar, to suffer her to be so much attached to him, as she was to her nephew Ferdinand. Clarice felt for her brother's situation; and frequently, when alone, endeavoured to discourse with him on the subject; but he ever evaded it, and that so cautiously, that he even forbore sometimes for months visiting the convent, lest she should renew it.

Practised by long use in the vice of dissimulation, the count resolved, when the first effervescence of his passion
was

was past, to conceal the discovery he had made from his son, but to use means, since all others had failed, finally to prevent farther connection between him and Leopold. Calling, therefore, his trusty domestic, he ordered him to hasten to an obscure part of the city which he exactly nominated, and to ask for a man called Deuhopt; to order him to attend him at the hour of seven in the evening, and to introduce him privately to his closet.

The domestic obeyed; Deuhopt promised obedience, and the servant returned with the message to his master. Unfit for company, the count shut himself up alone. He took no food; but was heard to traverse the apartment with a hurried step during the whole day.

Ferdi-

Ferdinand, on parting with Leopold, had hastened home, and on enquiring after his father, had been informed he was disordered, and alone in his closet. Waiting till he became somewhat uneasy, he ventured to knock at the door, saying—"My lord, it is three hours beyond the hour of dinner, I pray you come forth, or suffer the meat to be served in your apartment."

"Begone," replied the count, in a passionate tone, "I have no appetite for ought but revenge; depart, fool, lest it reach thee."

"For the love of Heaven, dear father, open the door: your health is, I fear, not well. Company will perhaps amuse your spirits."

The count opened the door; but his appearance increased the uneasiness of

Ferdi-

Ferdinand. His face was pale, his eyes projected beyond their sockets, his lips trembled, his hair was deranged and upright on his head, and his whole person bespoke at once an universal anarchy within.—“ Alas !” said Ferdinand, “ permit me to call help. You are not yourself ; sleep will act as a restorative to your wounded imagination.”

“ My wounded imagination !” repeated the count—“ and what, I pray you, young sir, hath wounded my imagination ? not my son ; for the world proclaims him perfect. His aunts, Adelaide and Clarice, those earthly saints,” added he satirically, “ trumpet forth his virtue on every occasion ; it cannot therefore be him.—Cry your mercy.—Call in the vassals ; expose your father’s weakness ; persuade them he is mad,

and

and seize on the wealth that death so long with-holds from your anxious grasp. Share it with your favourite Leopold—rejoice when you see me struggling in the last convulsion of nature, and quaff wine over my grave, to the safe voyage of my spirit never to return.”

Ferdinand regarded his father with astonishment.—“ My lord,” said he, “ dearly as I love Leopold, I would sooner never see him more, than see you thus. Why should *he* thus work on your fancy, when he is far away ?”

“ Be it so,” replied the count : “ mayest thou never see him more, and I recover my peace.—But be gone, I have no time for words—I am busy—To-morrow we will converse, at present it is impossible ;—leave me.”

“ Dear father, take some refreshment,

ment, and I will obey ; but indeed I cannot leave you thus."

" Send me then a manchet and a bumper of wine," replied the count ; " vex me not with questions, I wish to be alone to-day."

" I will fetch them myself," answered Ferdinand, " and return instantly." So saying, he flew with the warmth of filial duty ; and unwilling the lackeys should see his father so discomposed, brought the bread and wine himself.

The count for a moment appeared moved with his attention ; but having taken the wine, he again requested to be left alone until the hour of nine, when he observed he should be ready for supper. Fearful of exasperating him, as he appeared more calm, Ferdinand obeyed, and retired to his chamber,

ber, where he remained till six, when he again ventured to ask at his father's door if he had any commands.

"None," replied the count calmly, "but to send me a flask of wine. I am better—leave me."

"Thank God," returned Ferdinand emphatically; and fearful of renewing his disorder by opposition, he left him, desiring his favourite lackey to carry what he ordered.

He waited till the servant returned. His master, he said, was well, but told him he should be busy till late in the evening, and requested that he might not be again disturbed till he came forth, which would be as speedily as his business was complete.

Tranquillized by this reply, Ferdinand resolved to pass the time as pleasantly

santly as he could until supper, when he hoped to find his father's spirits composed.

* * * * *

At the hour of seven, the servant informed the count that Deuhopt attended according to his order. In faltering accent he commanded him to be admitted, and pouring out a goblet of wine he drank it, with the haste of a man who knows not what he is doing,—Deuhopt entered; he was apparently of the age of fifty, his person muscular, and his visage ill-favoured: in short, he was a man from whom a good painter would have chosen to personify a midnight assassin.—He entered the count's closet with less ceremony than might have been expected from

from the difference of their situations in life ; and was no sooner desired to take his place, than he obeyed, in a manner that, could it have been interpreted into words, might have run thus: "*I have earned this distinction.*"

"Deuhopt," said the count, "I am distracted. Leopold, I understand, hath been returned near a fortnight ; I never heard it till this day. Adelaide and Clarice warmly patronise him. The former, I have no doubt, should we attempt, as we before thought, to get him into our power, would not scruple to interest the Pope in his favour.—What is to be done ? Riches await thee : counsel thy master, and if possible heal his wounded mind."

Deuhopt made a long pause.—

"Could

“ Could I have foreseen this trouble,” at length replied he, “ it should long since have been prevented ; but your weakness (pardon me, my lord) hindered it.—It is easier to strangle a cub than a grown lion ; yet something must be attempted.”

“ But what, good Deuhopt ? who shall say that the hand of Heaven is not in it?—Would he had died in his cradle.”

“ And he had done so, but for your own command, my lord. A bold man leaves nothing to chance. Had he died *then*, you ere now had forgotten him.”

“ True, Deuhopt ; but murder is a foul sin. I would, if possible, save my soul.”

“ I see no more harm in killing a man than taking his property,” replied Deuhopt sarcastically ; “ marry, I think it the least sin of the two ; for poverty, in my mind, is a greater evil than death.

I have done a good deal of business for a little money; and for a round sum, I would not scruple to venture farther."

"Dare you *complete* the infernal business?" said De Hoffman in a smothered voice, and looking round the apartment, as if he feared an intruder."

"*I dare!*—I make no terms. You start at shadows, my lord. Give me the means, and if I fail you, stigmatize me for a coward, or a priest's fool."

"He visits the convent every night, and returns about the hour of eight or nine: where he lodges I have not yet been able to learn," said the count."

"Enough.—Think ye, my lord, he is at the convent to-night?"

"I know not; but you are too hasty, Deuhopt; some days hence we will talk farther on this business. What cannot be undone should be well discussed."

"True,

“True, my lord, but I have been here this two months attending your pleasure, my presence is necessary at home—I therefore wish to be speedy. The road between here and St. Mary’s is private, and an opportunity lost is not easily regained. When once a thing becomes necessary, the sooner done the better ; the mind grows easier daily ; or as you are so fearful, you need but do as other great men have done, found a convent, and the monks will secure you from reproach in this world, and promise you peace in that to come.”

“To found a convent,” repeated the count, “would only be to perpetuate the memory of my crime to after ages. —No, no, Deuhopt, no prayers can obliterate the sin.”

“You relinquish it then, my lord ?

“No—Hurry me not thus to per-

dition, Leopold hath brought over with him the eldest daughter of Fitzwalter, which shews the high trust reposed in him. His intimacy in that family, the uncertainty under which I labour respecting ——” The count suddenly hesitated, and looked again fearfully round ; at length—“ Deuhopt,” said he, “ take the lamp ; I think I heard steps in the antichamber.”

“ Fancy, my lord ; but I obey.” So saying, he took the lamp ; but the disturbance was alone to be found in the count’s mind, and returning he added—
 “ My lord, it is near the *hour of eight* : a good servant waits not always for the word of command. It is enough I know your wishes, and will endeavour to fulfil them ; all I request is, seek out, during my absence, the reward you think I merit, and order me a fleet
 horse

horse—I will immediately hasten homeward.” So saying, without waiting a reply, he left the count’s presence, and in a few minutes the castle.

For a short space the count remained as one lost in thought, when suddenly recollecting himself, he started up, and rushing through the apartments, called aloud on his domestics, which when assembled, he dispatched different ways, in all the avenues towards St. Mary’s, in order to seek Deuhopt, and to command him, as he valued the count’s favour and his own life, to return instantly to the castle.

The servants obeyed, though they knew not the necessity of the summons; but their haste was unavailing, for Deuhopt had used the utmost speed, and reached the convent before them.

CHAP. XI.

THE dark assassin pulling his hat over his brows, wrapping his muscular figure in his cloak, and bearing in his hand a dagger which he always wore, took the road to St. Mary's, near the gate of which he resolved to wait till the hour of nine, at which time, if Leopold was there, he would undoubtedly come forth.—He had not tarried many minutes before the gates closed, and by the glimmering of the stars he discovered a tall youthful figure, whom he concluded was the person he sought. He walked swiftly, but not so quick but Deuhopt overtook, and passing him, viewed him from head to foot with

with scrutinizing attention, though it was too dark to distinguish his features.

“What hour is it, young man?” at length said Deuhopt, approaching him.

“It is nine,” replied the youth; but before he could say more the villain exclaimed—“’Tis time then you were in the other world. Take that—and that”—stabbing him twice in the side with his dagger. Ferdinand, for it was himself returning from the convent, where he had been to pass an hour until supper, though staggered with the stroke, did not fall, but recoiling, drew his sword, and making a plunge, struck his murderous opponent through the right shoulder, so that the dagger dropped from his grasp, and he remained at his mercy.

“Villain, who are you? Speak, or I put you instantly to death—Why have you sought my life?”

“Are you not Leopold Sternheim?” answered Deuhopt, “if not, I have mistaken.—I trust you are not dangerously wounded? I have a friend who shall make amends for this disaster.”

Ferdinand, though sinking with the loss of blood and the agony of his wounds, exclaimed, presenting his sword—“Name him, villain, or I strike.”

“The count De Hoffman,” replied Deuhopt.

“The count De Hoffman!” repeated Ferdinand, “my father a murderer? then indeed is the blow mortal—”

As he spoke, he leaned for a moment

ment on his sword ; but overcome with the reflection, sunk on the earth.

“ H—ll and distraction !” exclaimed Deuhopt, “ ye are as much alike as brothers. I am unable to fly, and must stand the brunt of this infernal mistake” —

As he concluded speaking, six of the domestics, whom the count had sent in pursuit of Deuhopt, came up, and were not a little astonished to find their young lord, as they concluded, in the agonies of death, and at a small distance from him Deuhopt, severely wounded.

Losing no time in questions, they raised Ferdinand, and taking off their cloaks united them, and placing him therein, four of them bore him home, while the other two led Deuhopt ; whose wound, by his direction, they tied up.

The confusion of the moment left no room for caution. The servants, who by the way had met more of their fellows, employed as themselves in the errand of seeking Deuhopt, entered the hall, where the count was waiting in a state of mind still more dreadful than any he had yet experienced.—“Have you found him ?” exclaimed he, not observing those that followed, bearing Ferdinand. “Have you met Deuhopt? if ye have, why comes he not ?”

Before they could reply, the pale, inanimate, death-like body of Ferdinand, borne by his men, met his sight. He started, then for a moment stood transfixed with horror, and at length uttering a heavy groan, fell senseless on the ground.

Every assistance that could be procured

cured was called in, and the murderer and the victim were carried to their chambers. Whether they had wounded each other, or had been wounded by assassins, the attendants knew not ; for Ferdinand was unable to speak, and Deuhopt sullenly kept silence, or only replied, that if they wanted information, they must apply to their master.

The count, recovered from the insensibility into which he had at first fallen, was a prey to all the agonies of despair. For years he had borne the tortures of a reproaching conscience, but he now felt in his own person, what he had endeavoured to inflict on another.—He experienced, that the strong hand of God is powerful to save, and equally powerful to punish ; his only son lay expiring, if not by his hand, at least

by his command, though the blow was designed for another.

Inquiring momentarily of his situation, he learned that the surgeons could not that night decide, but they much feared the wounds were mortal.

Ashamed to appear before him, lest he should be apprised of the part he had acted, he was long irresolute, but at length parental affection overpowering every other sentiment, he repaired to Ferdinand's chamber. The youth was laid on his bed, and though his wounds were dressed gave scarcely a sign of life, until his fixed eye meeting his father's form, who hung over him in speechless agony, he trembled universally, groaned, and closed his eyes, as if to shut out an unwelcome object.

Though Ferdinand could not speak,

his

his actions were sufficiently expressive to inform the count, that he was well acquainted with the share he had in his misfortune, and wounded, even to the heart, he withdrew, fearful of hastening his end by his presence.

Driven almost to distraction, he enquired of Deuhopt, whose wound he was informed, though severe, was not dangerous ; hastening, therefore, to his chamber, he resolved to question him respecting the calamity that had happened. Deuhopt received him sullenly ; and the attendant being withdrawn, the count losing his temper said—" Villain, what could urge you to slay my son ? for I cannot think the stroke accidental."

" Blame yourself," replied Deuhopt boldly—" no one else urged me to murder ;

murder ; why did you not tell me your son was at the convent ? Did I give them the same height, the same proportion, the same voice ? If I did, blame me ; if not, accuse Heaven.”

“ If I lose my child,” answered the count in despair, “ thy life shall pay the forfeit—Poor return for that of my only son.”

“ *Only* sons are not more secure than others,” replied Deuhopt bitterly.—“ For my life, if I lose it, it will be in noble company ; so act as you please, I fear you not.”

In the anguish of his heart the count gnashed his teeth—“ Oh ! villain ! villain !” exclaimed he, “ death is due to my crimes, and I will court it, be it only to relieve the earth from thy murderous weight.”

“ You

“You will think better when you are cool,” replied he, with provoking irony. The family of Deuhopt, happy in obscurity, will suffer little disgrace, and my part of the transaction be soon forgotten ; but for a count of the Holy Empire, the stigma will remain for ages in his family, and be handed down in ballads, from generation to generation.”

The count's rage was too great for words, and but for the situation in which Deuhopt lay, he would have taken instant vengeance on him. Unable, however, to bear more, he rushed from the chamber, and retired to his apartment, where he ordered his domestics to bring him notice, several times in the hour, of the situation of his son.

In restless inquietude the count passed

sed the night, and morning brought no comfort. Ferdinand had spoken, but in so unconnected a manner, that it was plain he was delirious. Toward noon he became more collected, but so low, that his end was supposed to be near. Unable to bear suspense, the count seated himself, though out of sight, in his chamber, where, with his head sunk on his breast, he forgot not only Leopold, but every object in the creation except his son.

For many days Ferdinand lay fluctuating between life and death; sometimes without motion, or the smallest sign of existence, except the heaving of his bosom, and at others more dangerously attacked, and still more distressing to his father, in the wild ravings of delirium. During the whole
time

time the count remained in the adjoining apartment, he barely ate to support life, and rested only, when exhausted nature forced sleep to overpower him in the chair on which he sat. The image of sorrow and despair, his usual haughty manner had forsaken him, and the fever of his brain, that heretofore had engendered the frightful images that at times distracted his fancy, was quenched, by the floods of tears that fell from his eyes.

* * * * *

The misfortunes that had taken place in the family of De Hoffman were not long in reaching the ear of the Abbess. Resigned as she had thought herself to all worldly events, the disastrous state
of

of her favourite Ferdinand made her sensible, that earthly affections are, by our great Creator, so interwoven with our earthly bodies, that we ought never to flatter ourselves, that we can rise so far above mortality, as to overcome them, till the dust shall return to its native state, and the soul assume a new and a purer being. Clarice was equally moved with Adelaide: she remained for hours at the altar, praying for the life of her nephew; though one day, when alone with Alice, she said, "If our dear Ferdinand did not suffer, I should not be grieved, that my brother at length has learned to feel; his mind is narrow and contracted, and for his soul's good, it is well he should remember he is mortal."

Alice and Margaret, though only acquainted

quainted so short a time with Ferdinand, sincerely lamented his misfortune; but Isabel, whose acquaintance with him was longer, and who felt for him as warm a partiality as it was possible for so young a heart, wept almost incessantly.

To the questions made respecting the wounds Ferdinand had received, Deuhopt, when somewhat tranquillised, had invented an answer. He said, that De Hoffman had sent him in haste to recal Ferdinand from the convent, and that, on their return, they were attacked, and wounded by robbers. This account no one but the count and Ferdinand could refute; and as the first did not, and the last could not, it gained belief.

A fortnight had passed since Ferdinand's

nand's misfortune, when one evening, after he had lain the whole day in a state of apparent insensibility, he asked the attendants for his father. Rejoiced to hear him speak rationally, they ran to the count, who rose with rapture, and was preparing to hasten to him, when suddenly drawing back he seemed irresolute : so humiliating was the remembrance of his crimes, that they made him shudder, even to appear before his own child. Collecting his spirits he at length entered the apartment, and ordering the attendants to leave him, approached the bed—"My son," said he in a hesitating voice, "that Heaven may spare you to my wishes, and take my worthless life, is all I have to crave. May my follies rest upon my own head : too late I am

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convinced, that happiness is only to be found in rectitude."

"My father," replied Ferdinand faintly, "it is long, very long, I believe, since I recollected that I had a father, and soon shall I forget it for ever." The count groaned with anguish; but fearful of increasing his son's emotion, endeavoured to conceal his feelings.

"My senses," continued Ferdinand, "have, I believe, been wandering, and many frightful ideas have passed my fancy. I think I am now collected; and fearful of losing an opportunity that may never return, I would implore you, my dear father, ——"

"Oh Ferdinand! speak not thus tenderly, lest my heart burst, to think how little I have deserved such a son."

"To

“To me,” returned Ferdinand, “you were ever the best, and most kind of parents. We never, I believe differed, but on account of ——”

“Leopold,” added the count. “Oh Ferdinand! I have greatly injured that youth.”

“Is he then dead?” demanded Ferdinand wildly.

“Not that I know,” replied the count. “I was informed, some time since, he was in Bremen; whether he has left it, or where he is now, on my soul I am not acquainted.”

“Thank God,” answered Ferdinand, with an energy that sunk to his father’s heart. “I hope, then, he is safe, and as I think this my dying request, I trust you will grant it.—Promise me—it will sooth my parting spirit!”

De

De Hoffman, choaked with his grief, was some minutes before he could speak; at length he said, "Propose any oath you think most binding, and I will take it to fulfil, unasked, whatever you may require."

"I cannot require an oath from a parent," replied Ferdinand: — "It is, when I am dead, that you will remember Leopold only as my friend."

"Leopold will not need my friendship. For thy sake he may pity, but must for ever hate me."

"Indeed you know him not—Were you acquainted with his heart, you must have esteemed him."

"Ferdinand," replied the count in a solemn tone, "misguided by pride and ambition, I have, for some years, bewildered myself in the intricacies of
6 vice ;

vice ; but I here swear, by all my hopes of thy life, to endeavour to return to the right path, to do justice where it may be done, then hide my head in solitude and obscurity for ever."

" Oh my father ! if this be so, may your son live to soften that solitude by his unwearied duty, and to shew you, how dear your happiness is to him. But if he dies, you will, in your own heart, find a yet better comforter—the God who inspired the thought, will support you through it."

" Virtuous young man," replied De Hoffman, " thou wilt, if spared, be tried to the uttermost—But thou shalt know all : I will shake off this load of guilt, and instead of the father leading the son to rectitude, the son shall direct the father."

Collected, though weak, Ferdinand was astonished at the count's manner. The anguish of his mind was portrayed in his every word and feature; but his demeanour had lost its haughtiness, and his brow the contracted frown of suspicion.

However anxious to continue the discourse, the languor of Ferdinand forced him to decline it, and to request that he might be again left to himself. The count, immediately calling the attendants, retired to the adjoining apartment, where he had, since his son's misfortune, taken up his residence.

To his great relief, Ferdinand did not appear worse for the interview that had taken place; he lay in the same inanimate state, but had no return of his delirium. With less trepidation the

count ventured the next morning into his apartment. Ferdinand immediately spoke, and after receiving from his father a promise of future friendship to Leopold, he added——“Have you seen my aunts? I know they will severely feel for me; your presence, my dear father, would cheer them.”

“For the love of Heaven press me not on that subject,” replied the count, “I cannot see either Adelaide or Clarice.—I will *never* meet them more.”

The count's manner shocked Ferdinand: he had no doubt but he was relapsing into one of his usual paroxysms, and trembled at the recollection. His emotion was not lost on his father, who, endeavouring to overcome his disorder, said——“Excuse me, my son, I have
assured

assured you that hereafter, if you are granted to my wishes, I will have no concealments : let that for the present suffice—”

“ It shall,” answered Ferdinand ;
 “ but pardon me, dear as my aunts are to me, I have at St. Mary’s a yet stronger attachment. The young, the lovely, the innocent Isabel Fitzwalter, engrosses all my tenderness. I am at a moment to hide nothing from you ; but the secret is unknown to all else but Leopold.”

“ I can reply nothing, but that my voice and interest shall be exerted in all that concerns your happiness ; but you will judge best when you hear the dark story I have to disclose.—Alas ! in seeking to ennoble you, I have not

only destroyed my own happiness, but yours for ever."

After this interview, the count seldom left his son's apartment. Ferdinand perceived, with a satisfaction that had more effect on his health than medicine or skill, the change that daily strengthened in his father's temper. He was melancholy but calm, and what he had never before done, passed a considerable time in silent but fervent prayer.

After a month's severe suffering, Ferdinand began by slow degrees to recover, and was able to leave his bed; but to his great concern, as his health appeared to strengthen, his father's visibly decreased. A consuming melancholy preyed upon his constitution;

the

the restoration of his son, his first and dearest wish, though it afforded him the only consolation he was capable of feeling, was mixed with so gloomy a sorrow, that when he fixed his eyes on his countenance, as it began to resume its usual animation, his long contracted features would relax, and the starting tears bathe his cheeks.

Deuhopt's wound still remained unhealed, and though not accounted dangerous, from bad habit of body, and irritability of temper, frequently became inflammatory ; so that though it was far more slight than the severe stabs Ferdinand had received, the youth became first in a state of convalescence. The secret his father had promised to impart was never from his mind, but as it was visible that the count's decline

was from that, or from some other hidden cause, Ferdinand forbore to press it, and the count to reveal it, lest he should plunge his son into the state from which he had but just recovered.

Ferdinand was at length able to leave his chamber, and to take the exercise of riding. His first visit was to St. Mary's. Adelaide and Clarice received him as a son restored to them from the dead, and as he found that they had heard, and believed, the story fabricated by Deuhopt, of his being beset by robbers, he did not choose to disavow it. Margaret and Alice congratulated him warmly, while Isabel, with the candour and innocence natural to an uncorrupted heart, held out her hand, saying—"Oh Ferdinand! how much rejoiced am I to see you once again

again able to visit us ; your illness has cost me more tears, than I ever yet shed for any one but my sister Margaret."

" They were companionable tears," said Clarice. " Ferdinand ought to be flattered by the concern he has cost us all."

" I *am* flattered," returned he. " The business, or rather the pleasure of my life, will be, to return the obligation."

After some short conversation, Ferdinand informed them the uneasiness he was under respecting his father's health, which grew daily more alarming, and after passing an hour with them returned to the castle.

CHAP. XII.

THE count's appetite failed, his visage became pale and meagre, his erect and lofty carriage bent, his haughty and commanding manners mild, and his heretofore disregard of religion, settled into a strict observance of its most rigorous precepts. As his body weakened, his mind strengthened, and could the change have taken place with less than the loss of a parent, Ferdinand would have rejoiced at the alteration; as it was, he saw it with regret and sorrow, and judging that, if any secret preyed upon his mind, it might be easier from the avowal, he resolved to press it. De Hoffman's weakness
reduced

reduced him to keep his chamber, and one morning that Ferdinand thought him more calm than usual, he determined to introduce the subject always in his thoughts.

“My dear father,” said he, “during my illness, you promised to honour me with your confidence.—My heart is agonized to see your declining state, and I cannot but think the secret sorrow which you mentioned, preys upon your health.—If, then, you deem your son worthy, disclose it.—Behold me, my lord, ready to sacrifice my life, whenever your honour calls; and as you once said, the avowal would be followed by solitude and obscurity, behold me ready to share it. We will bear with us upright hearts, and cheeks untinged with shame, in which case

solitude can only cement our affection, by making us more acquainted with each other."

"Oh, my son!" replied De Hoffman, "thy kindness kills me; my story, like lightning, will blast thy youth and fame, strike death to thy virtuous heart, and thou wilt dying curse me."

Ferdinand was for a moment too much moved to reply; at length he said, "Oh! no, my father; shall the son say to the parent, why have you done this? Let me conjure you to relieve your soul by the disclosure, be what it may, and, on my part, I swear to do all I can with honour to the ease of your mind, even to relinquishing all further communication with Leopold Sternheim,

Sternheim, if he be obnoxious to your peace."

"Leopold Sternheim!——Leopold Sternheim!——repeated the count in a tone of agonized haste, "has been my bane, my perdition, my curse——"

"We will then, my lord," replied Ferdinand, "give him up with honour. The world is large enough for the count De Hoffman, and Leopold Sternheim."

"Oh! no! no!" answered he wildly, "it cannot be, the world cannot contain both; the shadow will fade, and the substance remain."

"My father is no shadow," replied Ferdinand, embracing him, fearful that one of his accustomed attacks was approaching.

L G . . . "Ha—

“Ha—ha—ha!” with a convulsive laugh, and his whole frame working with agony—“Leopold Sternheim—ha—ha—ha!—Who are you?”

Ferdinand trembled universally.—
“Your dutiful son, my lord,” said he.

“Your name, your name young man.—Nay, look not thus, I am not mad.—What is your name?”

Ferdinand, fearful of increasing his irritation, resolved to give way to it.—

“Ferdinand De Hoffman, my lord,” replied he.

“True, true; but your rank, your rank? Who was your mother?”

Ferdinand, shocked beyond measure, repented beginning a subject that had visibly so much disordered his father.

“I am distinguished by the title of
“Baron,”

baron," replied he, not from my own merits, but by the honour of my ancestors."

"Ha—ha—ha!—but your mother's name?" cried he, with increased distraction.

"Julia Lebitz."

"Ha—ha—ha!—I thought the baron De Hoffman's mother had been the heiress of Eltzen."

Ferdinand now was convinced his father's malady was a confirmed insanity, and unable to bear more, he entreated him to endeavour to sleep. The count convulsively caught hold of his arm—"I am not mad, Ferdinand,"—said he, "I am not mad,—Leopold Sternheim is—my—"

As he struggled to speak, the agonies of his mind overcame him, his visage
became

became black and distorted, his breast heaved, his limbs were stretched beyond their natural length, and his whole body was bathed with a cold perspiration, resembling that which accompanies the final separation of the soul from its earthly tenement.

Ferdinand laid his father upon the couch, and called assistance ; but it was a considerable time before he recovered, and then so weak and disordered, that it was accounted necessary to keep him still, and the chamber in darkness, fearful of his relapse.

Overwhelmed with melancholy, Ferdinand attended constantly in his apartment. He considered minutely all that had passed, but could find no clue to lead him to develop it. His father's distraction was evident ; yet he could
not

not but surmise some secret lurked under it. His dislike to Leopold from their first meeting, and his pursuing him, even to the employing a common assassin to take his life, he concluded, in charity, was insanity; as men, in that most pitiable of all states, are particularly capricious in their affections and distastes, and the Count could have no real dislike to a youth whom he had never before seen. Sometimes he thought of questioning Deuhopt, but that intention was banished as soon as it arose. In the first place, his heart recoiled to hold conversation with a murderer; and a yet stronger objection was, that he feared it was impossible, without hearing something of his father, that however repugnant, he could neither refute nor resent—"Should he dare

dare say to me," said Ferdinand, mentally, "that my father employed him to way-lay and stab Leopold, I should tear him to atoms; and yet, horrid reflection, if it be true, I should act unjustly. The most direful madness could alone give rise to such a design."

The Count's emotion was succeeded by a fever, that held him for some days in so violent a manner, as left but small hopes of his life. His wanderings, during the whole time, turned on the object that perpetually haunted him, and frequently did the pious Ferdinand take the whole fatigue of attending him in his worst ravings, lest he should utter something, that might lessen him among his dependants. At length the violence of the fever was overcome by weakness, and he gave signs of returning

ing reason. An holy priest that had attended daily presented himself, and having prayed by the side of De Hoffman, as he perceived his senses were returned, asked him if he would relieve his mind, as is customary in sickness, by confession.—“ No,” replied the Count, “ I have confessed to God, and he hath inflicted on me a more severe penance, than you, or any of your fraternity, ever yet invented. Pray by me, good father, and pray for me ; but for my faults, they are beyond the reach of man to pardon. The priest, by his desire, then remained with him in earnest prayer a considerable time. When he was withdrawn, De Hoffman called to Ferdinand, “ Draw near, my son,” said he, “ my senses are now clear, but how long they may remain so, Heaven alone
can

can tell; I would, therefore, while in my power, though not to a priest, but to thee, relieve my soul by a full confession.—Prepare thyself for a tale of horror;—but, oh, my child, in thy detestation of my crimes, remember pity! Fly like a pestilence from the sins of envy and avarice——Despise not thy father living, nor hate him dead.”

Ferdinand threw himself on his knees by his side—“ Oh, my ever revered, my honoured parent,” said he, “ shall my eye magnify your faults? surely not; the affection of the son will cast a shade over them, and such duty as I shall expect, if Heaven hereafter gives me children, such duty will I pay to you.”

“ Raise my head, my son—Remembrance choaks me——Give me thy hand—

hand—It trembles already—what will it do, when the sum of my atrocities are laid open to thee?”

“It will then be firm, father; the certainty cannot surpass the suspense.—I am prepared—If money can pay the wrong, we will make ample amends; but if blood, the Virgin have mercy on us. The business of my life shall be to obliterate the stain.”

The Count then began a relation of his life for the last eighteen years.—The narrative was frequently broken by sighs, groans and tears. Ferdinand interrupted him not; but, fearful of his seeing the strong emotion it caused him, concealed his face behind the curtain. His knees appeared too weak to bear his weight, he trembled universally, and large drops of perspiration

issued

issued from every pore of his agitated frame.

The fearful tale ended—Ferdinand could not speak. His father said, “Oh, my son! I know you must hate me; but curse me not, the curse of Heaven is upon me, and already weighs me down to destruction.”

Ferdinand struggled to overcome his concern, he threw back the curtain, and clasped his arms about his father. “Rather,” exclaimed he, “do not you curse me: had *I* never *been*, this sorrow had, in all probability, been spared you.”

“Oh! no,” replied the Count, “the sin was in my heart, and only wanted opportunity to take root and destroy me; once committed, there was no retreat. It has impoisoned every hour of
my.

my life, and will torture me in that to come."

"Say not so, the ear of the Most High is ever open to the penitent; all that can be done we will do, and leave the event to Heaven."

"Alas, my son, we cannot recall the dead. Oh, John! John! ill-fated, misguided man! thy prospects blasted, thy youth destroyed—Thy discontented spirit has never failed to disturb my nightly dreams.—In the great and final account, how shall I meet thee? One glance from thee, and my overcharged soul would sink at once."

Ferdinand sighed—"Heaven spare you, my dear father, to make all possible reparation; for the present, endeavour to compose your wounded spirit."

"I will,"

“ I will,” replied the Count, “ and do thou, also. Retire ; thy eyes are heavy ; forget, if it be possible, thy father’s crimes in sleep——We will talk further when we meet again ; but I now feel so overpowered, that I can no more——”

Ferdinand pressed his father’s hand to his lips, and calling the attendants, withdrew.

He no sooner left his presence, than he gave way to the agonies that oppressed him. Instead of retiring to rest, he walked the apartment with a hasty and disordered step, and smiting his forehead, he exclaimed——“ Heaven direct me through this maze of evil ! Fortune, life, all I would willingly resign—but my honour, my probity, must be also forfeited.——Oh ! save me from
that,

that, and I will forget my blood, and in some far country seek, myself, to forget my shame."——After a long pause, suddenly starting up, he called an old and trusty domestic, who immediately attending, he said—"Geoffrey, can'st thou tell me how doth Deuhopt? Methinks his wound should be healed, and yet I am told it is not so."

"You are truly informed, my gracious master, Deuhopt's wound is still inflammatory; his natural bad habit, and the impatience he gives way to, will probably long keep it so.——Pardon me, but I think mankind would have no loss should he die: the Saints have mercy on him——"

"Mark me," said Ferdinand. "I have chosen thee, Geoffrey, as a man

on whom I can rely—Deuhopt is a villain.”

“ Marry, I can easily believe that ; no one would doubt it, that heard his blasphemies.”

“ He was the villain who stabbed me !—”

“ My lord !” said Geoffrey, as if he doubted the evidence of his hearing.

“ See thou bury this intelligence in thy own breast. I repeat, he was the assassin who wounded me ; as yet, it must, for reasons best known to myself, remain secret. Be it thy care to place a watch over him, that he escape not : let him not suspect it, but with the shew of liberty, see that he leaves not the walls of the castle.”

“ As yet, my noble master, he cannot
attempt

attempt it; but should he, old as I am, I would cleave him to the chime, before the villain who wounded you should advance a step."

"Then would you, Geoffrey, defeat my purpose: his life, at the present moment, is of the highest importance to me.—Should he recover, and attempt to escape, and all other means fail, charge him boldly with what I have told thee, but not without necessity.—Heed not what *he may say*, his tongue is fraught with falsehood; confine him closely in the castle until further command.—Farewell—I will not forget thee."

As Ferdinand spoke he left the hall, when the old man said—"Forget me! no, marry, will you not, I warrant; for I defy Satan, or even his imp, that at-

tempted your precious life, to say you ever forgot the meanest of your vassals—Blessings on you; your father's pride will die with him, you will never hand it down to posterity.—Were I inclined to swear now, how heartily could I curse that villain, Deuhopt. Escape me! He shall be cunning if he does, though his master, Lucifer, should help him.”

CHAP. XIII.

FERDINAND did not attempt to sleep, he well knew the effort was unavailing; but remaining a time sufficient to persuade his father he had done so, he returned to his chamber. The Count's mind, relieved by a confession of crimes, that had for so many years embittered his peace, and wearied with the agitation the recital had cost him, slept profoundly for some hours. When he awoke, though weak and exhausted, he was more composed than was customary to him, and requested the priest to be sent for to pray by him.—For several days the Count remained with little alteration in his health; at length

he grew rapidly weaker, though without violent pain; and, on the day month that he had made the dreadful avowal of his secret grief to his son, died in his arms. Ferdinand sincerely lamented him, though he derived consolation from the reflection, that though his life had been erroneous, his death was penitent and exemplary. For several days previous to that awful event, he held long and private conversations with Ferdinand, in which he settled all his worldly affairs; and as he retained his speech and senses to the final close of life, said, as his son encircled him for the last time in a filial embrace—"I die satisfied—Thy arrangement is wise—On the mercy of heaven I throw myself for pardon—My sins are manifold, but the goodness of my Creator is unbounded.—

Cleansed

Cleansed from my mortal crimes, we shall, I trust, my virtuous son, meet again.—Pray for me—Pray those I have most injured to pardon me.—I die with hope.—The blessed Saints receive into their protection——my parting soul—”

Such was the end of De Hoffman, a man naturally brave and virtuous; but who, misguided by ambition, in grasping at the shadow of riches and honour, lost the substance of peace and happiness, and embittered his days, and in all probability cut them short; for at the time of his death he had not completed his forty-eighth year.

The funeral of De Hoffman, though conducted with the utmost respect and solemnity, was without pomp, his son attending with unfeigned sorrow as the

principal mourner. Ferdinand then, as speedily as his mind was sufficiently calm, arranged his affairs; informing his vassals, that he had business which would detain him from Bremen for some months at least. Though warmly attached to his aunts, he had not visited them since his father's death; but sent daily to enquire after their health. This business at length being concluded, he wrote the following letter to the lady Adelaide.

*“ Ferdinand De Hoffman to his Aunt
Adelaide, Abbess of St. Mary's.”*

“ Most honoured Lady,

“ Ungrateful and unfeeling as I may appear, to undertake a voyage to England, so soon after the death of my
father,

father, and that without seeing my much esteemed friends; I beseech you to suspend all harsh opinion of me till we meet again.—To the gentle sisters, Margaret and Isabel, and the venerable matron, Alice, I present my warmest wishes: conjure them not to affix disrespect to my omitting to bid them farewell, but rather to pity than condemn the man, who acts from a necessity which rends his heart. In all probability the lady Isabel will have left St. Mary's before my return; and I may perhaps see her no more; in which case tell her, that my constant prayers shall be for her happiness. With this letter, my dear aunt, I remit a box, most secure in my absence in your possession. Should I return safe, I can reclaim it; but if any ill-fortune should attend me,

by land or water, or I remain beyond six months, I pray ye open it, and act as your wisdom shall direct. My family business is all arranged.—Angels guard you, prays

“Your unhappy nephew,

“FERDINAND DE HOFFMAN.”

This letter, with the box, Ferdinand intrusted to Geoffrey, to be delivered as soon as his departure took place.

The evening before De Hoffman left Bremen, Geoffrey informed him, he though Deuhopt better; that by some means he had heard of his intended departure, and was pressing to see him, as he said he had business of the utmost consequence to communicate.—Ferdinand paused.—“Can you lead him hither?” at length said he. “How-
ever

ever repugnant he is to my sight, I will speak to him."

Geoffrey answered, there was no difficulty, as, though he was undoubtedly weakened by his wound, it did not affect his walking.

"Bring him, then," said De Hoffman, "I will wait him here."

Geoffrey obeyed, and speedily returned with Deuhopt, whom he left at the door of the hall. On his entrance, the blood mounted in the cheeks of De Hoffman—"I understand you wish to speak with me—What is your business," said he.

"My lord," replied Deuhopt, "I wish first to express my sorrow for what has happened; and also, as I hope my wound will now speedily be healed, to return home.—I have no doubt,

but the late Count, your father, previous to his death, informed you of the business I have so faithfully transacted for him. He promised to reward me liberally for my journey hither, and I have no doubt you will be equally generous."

"I have no reward equal to your merits," answered Ferdinand—"except the reward bestowed by the common executioner—"

Deuhopt looked at him with astonishment.

"I find," said he, "I surmised truly; the Count, your father, has told you all—But, young lord, you do not yet know me; I am not a man to be scared.—I know my power, and it were well you knew your interest."

"If my interest depended on such a
miscreant

miscreant as thou," replied Ferdinand, "I would throw it from me with disdain.—Sure thou hast forgotten who I am, and who thou art—"

"I am what I seem," answered Deuhopt, passionately, "while you are——"

"Ferdinand De Hoffman," replied he with firmness—"And thou art, observe me well, a base assassin—a murderer—one who way-laid me on my way from the convent of St. Mary's, and stabbed me twice in the side.—Cans't thou deny that?"

"No; not to you—but who employed me?"

"Is that to me a question?" replied Ferdinand with increased haughtiness. "In murder all are principals; *thou*, and only *thou*, wert the perpetrator,

trator, and on thee only shall my vengeance fall."

"My lord," said Deuhopt, in an alarmed tone, "your father—"

"Speak not of my father," interrupted Ferdinand quickly—"dare not pollute my father's name with thy lips—It was *thou* that stabbed me, and before the judges, I need no more to condemn thee at first to the torture, and then to the fire."

"But, my lord, I can bring forth claims that will—"

"Bring them forth then," returned Ferdinand; "for what will not the murderer affirm to save his forfeit life?—but where are thy proofs? Go—go, Deuhopt—*I am not a man to be scared*; thy life hangs upon my mercy, therefore beware.—I am not to be trifled
with

with—My honour is dearer to me than my life; assail that, and thou dy'st. We now, I think, understand each other.—Retire to thy chamber, all necessities will be allowed thee. I shall be absent some time, but I expect to find thee on my return, or look to it. It is not the narrow bounds of Germany, Italy, or France, that shall conceal thee from my vengeance; I would search Europe to rid the world of a villain.”

Deuhopt attempted to reply, but Ferdinand interrupted him, by saying—“ Away, answer me not—thy life depends upon thy prudence.—What, ho, Geoffrey, attend Deuhopt to his chamber.”

Deuhopt had no doubt, from the spirit of De Hoffman, but that he was

2

capable

capable of all he threatened; and on mature consideration, he felt himself intirely in his power.—The word of so rich and powerful a lord would, undoubtedly, be taken before that of an unknown stranger, who, on oath, could be convicted of an attempt to assassinate the person he accused. In the mind of Deuhopt, the arrogance of the late Count appeared nothing to that of Ferdinand, and cursing his own folly for having left a peaceful home, in sullen silence he accompanied Geoffrey to his apartment.

On the ensuing morning, Ferdinand left Bremen, and embarked on board a vessel bound for England.

* * * * *

Geoffrey,

Geoffrey, attentive to his master's commands, repaired to the convent, with the box and the letter for the Abbess. Her surprise, when she heard of De Hoffman's departure, surpassed all bounds. She had thought his absence long from the convent, yet attributed it merely to his grief for his father's death——But that he should leave Bremen without seeing, or taking leave of them, astonished her. His letter bespoke uneasiness; but surely Leopold, however worthy, was not to be considered as so nearly concerned in his welfare as herself or Clarice. She also felt disappointed on account of Isabel, whom, she had flattered herself, he was warmly attached to; and, after reading the letter, she presented it to Clarice, saying—
“All our friends are welcome to see
this

this letter; for if, among a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, some one may understand his motives; which, I confess, I do not."

Clarice read it attentively—"I am as much at a loss as yourself," replied she, "and am equally displeased, or perhaps more so, at his unaccountable conduct. The possession of wealth and rank may have the same effect on him they had on his father; he, I grieve to say, was never estimable afterwards."

"My dear Clarice," answered the Abbess, "speak not so bitterly. The Count is, I trust, at rest; his virtues should be remembered, and his errors forgotten.—Dame Alice, here, is our elder, let her read it, and give us her unbiassed judgment upon it—"

The dame took the letter with modesty,

desty, and reading it attentively, replied —“ To judge from this, I should think some secret uneasiness, rather than disrespect or wilfulness, has occasioned this seeming neglect in your nephew. He intreats you to suspend your judgment till his return—He says also, that he acts from a necessity that rends his heart; and undoubtedly, should ought happen to cut short his days, in that box, confided to your care, you will find a sufficient reason for his conduct—”

“ Dear dame,” interrupted Isabel, “ though he has behaved unpardonably, why talk of his death, I protest it makes me shudder.—I hope he will live many years, and to excuse himself, to the satisfaction of the Abbess and sister Clarice.”

“ I trust he will,” replied Clarice.

“ My

“ My first anger past, I adopt your good dame’s opinion—but come, you are also to read the letter.”

As she spoke she presented it to Margaret, who, as she read the contents, the impatient Isabel looked over her shoulder.

“ If my humble opinion may be advanced, I think my noble friend will hereafter clear himself from blame,” said Margaret.

“ No, that he cannot,” replied Isabel, petulantly—“ What, to go without even bidding his kind aunts farewell ! surely, that is unpardonable. For me, I did not expect it, though, out of respect to the Abbess, he might have done so—I hope I shall go home—I never wish to see him again.”

“ Do you wish then to leave us, Isabel ?”

Isabel?" said the Abbess, fixing her eyes upon her.

"No, on my life; but I am so angry, I could say any thing.—Leopold is a good youth, and I love him; but Ferdinand has other friends, who esteem him as much as Leopold, and he should not neglect them."

"My dear child," said the Abbess, "thy young heart knows no disguise —Thou either lovest Ferdinand too little, or too much—That knowledge among friends is nothing—but beware how thou placest thy affection, until assured of the worth of the object.—Nay, blush not.—Retire with thy sister Margaret, and converse freely."

Isabel waited no second permission, but accompanied by Margaret, retired.

"I am

“ I am vexed beyond measure,” said she, bursting into tears, and concealing her face on Margaret’s shoulder; “ now will every one think that I am a bold forward girl, and that I love Ferdinand.”

“ No one will think any thing derogatory to my beloved Isabel,” replied Margaret. “ If Ferdinand proves worthy, and hereafter lady De Launcy’s consent could be obtained, sure there would be no disgrace on either side.”

“ But he hates me, Margaret.”

“ Why should you think so?”

“ His conduct plainly shews it. But I don’t care, I hope to live with you, Margaret.—I shall soon forget him.”

“ If it be necessary, I hope you will; for me,” said Margaret with a sigh, “ I have

have been, ever since I came into the convent, examining my heart, and I am quite sure I shall never marry."

"Nor I," echoed Isabel; you, perhaps, Margaret, may change your mind——"

"Never," answered Margaret. "If I am acknowledged the lawful daughter of the house of Fitzwalter, I shall not dare to disgrace it by an ill-sorted marriage; if my claim is disallowed, I will bring shame into no man's family."

"Margaret," said Isabel shrewdly, "has thou ever seen the man thou could'st like to marry?"

Margaret averted her blushing face — "If," said she, "I had been born in humble life, and Leopold had loved me, I would have followed him through-
out

out the world—as it is, thou knowest, I dare not think of him.”

“ If I may judge by his looks, were he a king, he would think of you, Margaret—If people are good, what is there in blood? If Ferdinand had loved me, I would have worked, nay, even have begged with him.”

“ So would not I,” said Margaret, “ I would not so greatly have injured him. But of this be assured, I will never marry.—Leopold I must not think of, and I will not think of any other.”

“ Well, then, we will be nuns,” replied Isabel. “ Heigh-ho! I don’t much like it, neither—nuns are good women, and I love them; but yet I should like such a husband as Ferdinand better.—I love children too, Margaret——Nuns

have no children, and I often think how happy women are who have children. — I don't believe, on second thoughts, I should like to be a nun."

"Now, I think I should," answered Margaret. "If I loved any one, and he was worthy of my affection, but that untoward circumstances prevented our union, I would, forsaking all others, devote myself to Heaven. In my morning, noon, and evening prayers, I would remember him, and mingling his idea with my devotions, consider myself his destined spouse, if not on earth, in that world, where the narrow distinctions of wealth and birth will be forgotten."

In such discourse, the sisters passed the time, till called to the refectory to dinner.

CHAP. XIV.

THE vessel which conveyed Leopold with a fair wind safely reached Hull, where the youth purchasing himself a horse, and using his utmost speed, took the way to Northumberland. On his reaching the hamlet, to his utter vexation he learned, that only two days before, the friar, escorted by De Launcy and his men, had set out for the metropolis, in order to take his trial.—Weary and exhausted he repaired to David's cottage, but found the good old man was also gone. Bridget pressed him to stay and take rest, but fearful of causing suspicion he declined it, and
resolved

resolved to pass the night in Austin's deserted cave.

As his mind was too much disturbed to suffer him to sleep early, he resolved to repair to St. Margaret's, and spend an hour before he attempted to rest. He walked through the cloisters into the nave of the chapel : the moon shone bright through the shattered windows, and beamed its clear and soft light over the objects that surrounded him.

Casting his eyes toward the altar, for a moment he imagined he discovered Austin kneeling, but checking the thought, he said—"Who are ye, I pray, that come so late to your devotions?—A stranger, I deem ; for the cottagers shun the chapel, unless by day-light."

"You judge truly," replied the person rising. "I came merely to offer

up my thanks. I but reached the coast in the afternoon, where we were obliged to put in for distress of weather. I have left the ship, and by easy journies I trust shall reach my monastery to die ; for seventy summers have passed over my sinful head."

" You are a priest then, father ?" answered Leopold, " can I assist you ? I have money, that the generous donors will think well spent in this cause— How far from hence is your monastery ?"

" Alas ! my son, I belong to the Benedictines of Whitechapel," said the friar. " At my age the journey will be long, but my brethren will assist me on my way."

" I am bound to London, father," answered Leopold ; " If you can ride on horse-

horseback, I will furnish you with a horse? but your pace I cannot keep, for business of the utmost import demands my presence."

"If it be good," replied the Benedictine, "God speed you."

"It is good, friar," answered Leopold. "It is the cause of an upright and persecuted man, and of an helpless orphan."

"Then," said the Benedictine, "could my prayers give thy horse wings instead of feet, he should have them."

"Had you journied here some time since," replied Leopold, "you would have met a warm welcome from a kind friar to whom I am now going."

"I would it had been so," answered the Benedictine; "as it is I know no one in this vicinity. I hoped to have

seen a worthy master and mistress to yonder castle, whom, some nineteen years since, I remembered a noble youth and a lovely maid; but on inquiring I find they have pressed before me to the grave."

"Nineteen years," repeated Leopold after a pause, "that then must have been the late baron Fitzwalter."

"It was," answered the Benedictine, "and a gentle maid called Blanch Stanley."

"Gracious powers!" exclaimed Leopold, "you then knew them? Their daughter is now in a convent at Bremen; the friar I spoke of is persecuted, even to death, on her account, merely for affirming that she is legitimate."

"And who dare say she is not so?" demanded the friar.

“ The baron’s second wife, and her upstart lord. A trial is now depending, and I had not tarried to-night, but to rest my horse, who could proceed no further. I myself am returned from Bremen, where I attended the lady Margaret Fitzwalter. I landed at Hull, and not knowing but the friar was still imprisoned at the castle, have lost my time in coming hither.”

“ Perhaps the time may not be entirely lost,” replied the priest. “ Is there no proof of this orphan’s legitimacy ?”

“ Yes, father, we have some to bring forward, which no doubt will content all good men.”

“ Where were the parties wedded ?” said the Benedictine.

“ Even at this broken altar, father, I

am told ; but, alas ! the reverend priest that married them went on a mission to India, from whence he never returned, and there is no regular entry of the marriage."

" You mistake," replied the Benedictine, " the father indeed went on a mission to India, and has since been in Norway, and lately in the Scottish isles, in all of which countries he has suffered innumerable difficulties ; but God hath, in his wisdom, borne him through them, to do one piece of justice ere he die."

" Father !" said Leopold in a voice of astonishment.

" I am that man.—At this altar I wedded the youthful pair, two domestics were alone the witnesses : their persons I recollect, but their names I have forgotten."

Leopold

Leopold appeared frantic with joy, he caught the friar in his arms, and had he, instead of declaring Margaret's legitimacy, informed him he was the rightful owner of the domain, he could not have testified more unbounded rapture.

At length somewhat more composed, he conducted his aged friend to David's cottage, where he left him to the care of Bridget, himself returning to the friar's cell to pass the night.

He rose at early day, and as he had less fear, as the holders of the castle were absent, went to David's, where he brought his horse, who had browsed during the night round the cave. He insisted on the father's using it, while himself walked by his side till noon, when he purchased another horse of a traveller whom they met in their way.

Leopold was now bewildered how to act. He was anxious to reach London on account of Austin, but was fearful of leaving the Benedictine, who was feeble with age, lest any vexatious accident should happen him by the way, and deprive the orphan Margaret of the person who could, beyond dispute, authenticate her parents' marriage, and consequently her own claim.

This consideration determined him. He used, however, as much speed as could be done consistent with the friar's safety, and without accident reached London, though not so early as he wished, for Austin's trial had taken place that same day.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

PREVIOUS to Leopold's arrival in England, lord De Launcy had neglected no step to arrange the expected trial in his favour. He sent his son Richard to London, and as he before only held Austin without a lawful right to do so, he now obtained the king's order to detain him, until he answered the high charges laid against him. He was first accused of using diabolical arts, to ensnare the affections of Margaret Fitzwalter, as nothing less could effect the strong attachment she had to him. Secondly, of having stolen, in the dead of night, the said Margaret, and conveyed her where no one could

N 5 . discover,

discover, and where he refused to tell, but with daring villainy gloried in his crime. Thirdly, and lastly, with employing Cuthbert, an apparent Ethiopian, but who, doubtless, was an agent of hell, to complete his diabolical intention; as he the said Cuthbert, in strength and activity, of which he had given proof while in the castle, surpassed all mortal men, as he also did in his skill in music.

Such was lord De Launcy's charge against Austin; not that he himself believed it, but to charge a priest with sorcery and seduction, was at once striking at the root of his life, and he had no doubt would condemn him to the stake, before he could bring forward a trial to prove Margaret's birth-right.

In the mean-time the Franciscans had not been idle. They petitioned the king, by their superior, to be arbitrator in the cause himself, and also of his gracious goodness, to suffer to be laid before him the proofs Austin had to produce of Margaret's legitimacy. The king granted the first part of the petition, and appointed a time for the trial of Austin ; but for that respecting Margaret's birth-right, he ordered it to be delayed, as he was informed by Richard De Launcy, that his father could not exactly, at the present, procure the proof he had of the falsehood of their allegations. This subterfuge was plainly the art of De Launcy, but as there was no alternative, they were obliged to submit.

At length the time appointed for the trial drew nigh. Lady De Launcy,

with a splendid train, but an aching heart, departed first for London: the baron and some of his domestics remaining to guard Austin, who followed in a few days after. The distress of the vassals on seeing Austin taken from them wounded the pride of De Launcy, and forced tears from the eyes of Austin. They followed the cavalcade for miles with prayers and cries, commending their good father to the protection of every Saint whose name sorrow would suffer to occur to their remembrance. De Launcy, vexed beyond his patience, ordered the horsemen to use their utmost speed, and to leave behind them sounds so disagreeable to his ear, and at length succeeded in intirely losing all sight and hearing of the distressed peasants.

In

In less than three weeks they reached the capital, where Austin was immediately lodged in prison, and ordered to provide for his trial, which was speedily to take place. The friar heard it unmoved. He had only wished for the presence of Leopold, who might, he concluded, have returned with the confession (for he was uninformed, of the storm that had lengthened their passage); not that at present it would be useful, as the trial was only on his own account, but he feared it not being produced in time.

The venerable senior David, though weak with age, by the bounty of the Franciscans also made shift to reach the capital, in order to corroborate by his testimony, if called upon, the truth of what the friar might advance.

The

The day of trial was at length fixed ; De Launcy engaged the most skilful lawyers in the metropolis against the friar ; while, on his part, he was unsupported but by integrity and the justice of his cause.

At length the appointed morning arrived : a strong escort guarded Austin to the great Hall at Westminster, where the trial was to take place. The singularity of the accusation had collected there all the nobles of the kingdom, as it had through the streets the common people, to see a man to whom rumour imputed such heavy crimes. With a firm step and a serene countenance, the friar passed on his way : his face was shaded by his cowl, and his coarse woollen garment wrapped loosely round his meagre frame. The remains

of dignity were however still visible, and while the people expressed their abhorrence at his crimes, his person and demeanour excited their respect and pity.

On reaching the Hall, the warden of the prison gave Austin to the care of proper officers.—On a raised throne of state sat the king, dressed in his royal robes; the first counsellors of the kingdom were placed on stools on each side of him, but lower down, and clerks were appointed to note exactly every word that passed from the parties. The nobility were seated in galleries, and the superiors of all the Franciscan institutions in the kingdom attended to hear the event.—Lord De Launcy, with his son, lawyers, and domestics, stood ready, when called upon; and at
the

the bar was placed the friar, with a guard behind him, and at some distance the aged David, ready if called upon.

The indictment was then read—It accused the friar of sorcery and seduction, and he was called upon to answer, whether he would plead guilty, or not guilty.

“Not guilty,” answered Austin.

“It is well you prove yourself so,” returned Henry: “it will save your body from the stake.”

“Were I guilty,” replied Austin, “the consequence here would be less than that hereafter.”

“Proceed,” said Henry. “De Launcy, bring forth thy proofs.”

De Launcy spoke first. He related all that he had heard of Austin’s taking
up.

up his residence in St. Margaret's cave, where he was said to have gained, by his art, a mastery over certain evil spirits that before frequented it. That he was on terms of friendship with the late baron Fitzwalter, could not be denied, and that after the baron's death, he shewed the most extravagant fondness for his base-born daughter, Margaret, who, as she grew up, contrary to the manner of children, would forsake every thing, to join the friar in prayer at the old chapel.—That the priest had taught her foreign languages, and apparently wished her to possess more knowledge than was necessary for a woman ; for as she was an English woman, and in all probability would have been wedded to an Englishman,

lishman, she could have no proper use for more than her mother tongue. De Launcy then related the introduction of Cuthbert, whom he spoke of as employed by Austin, and as a person of more than mortal strength, and from his skill in music supposed to possess supernatural powers. Richard De Launcy was next called.—He carefully concealed his own design against Margaret, but declared, that the night of her evasion he had heard strange noises throughout the castle—that passing through one of the galleries with his man, the lamp being extinguished, he had received so severe a blow, that it almost stunned him.

Gilbert corroborated this account, by declaring that he himself received several

several blows, and that he firmly believed from a hoof, rather than a hand, it fell so heavily.

Thomas next swore, that passing through the hall he saw the gates unbarred, and the bridge down; but that only leaving the spot for the space of two minutes; on his return he found all of them secured; a circumstance impossible in so short a time by mortal means. The accusation being concluded, the king replied,—“ You hear, friar, what is said; how will you answer to it?”

“ With truth; and Heaven prosper the innocent and confound the guilty.”

“ Amen,” replied Henry; “ and, as you are your own council, reply first to the lord De Launcy’s charge.”

“ May it please your grace I will,
and

and as briefly as may be.—That I have resided in St. Margaret's Cave, almost sixteen years, is most true; but as to having gained a mastery over the evil spirits that frequented it, I know nothing; for I saw no one, nor heard any so wicked as myself—”

“ You then confess your guilt ?” interrupted one of De Launcy's counsellors.

“ I pray ye give me time—I am not ~~in~~ flippant of speech, nor skilled in the subtleties of your law.—I repeat, I saw no one, nor heard any so wicked as myself; for I saw nothing but the works and blessings of my great Creator spread around, and heard nothing but those sounds, which to my heart whispered *his* strength, and *my* weakness—the thunder, and the unchained winds,
that

that re-echoed from mountain to mountain, and seemed to say, "*Where art thou that my power cannot reach thee?*"—My peaceful residence in the cave banished those fears that the peasantry before had of the spot; and they, after a time, passed it with less alarm, for they naturally said, if this man is safe at all times, why should not we, who only pass occasionally.—For the baron William Fitzwalter, he was my dearest friend, whom neither sorrow, adversity, nor even disgrace, could tear from me. Miserable man that I am to have outlived him.—My heart was known to him—his most secret thoughts were confided to me, as was his marriage with the maid, Blanch Stanley, of which I can bring proofs—"

"Stop there," interrupted one of the lawyers,

lawyers, "what you advance now is irrelevant to the subject now discussed."

"I obey," returned Austin. "The baron died in the flower of his days, and left two daughters. I loved them both for his sake, and for their own; for fairer blossoms never blessed a parent-tree; but if either had a superior claim on my love, it was Margaret, for her helpless, her orphan state. Affection begets affection, and while I regarded Margaret as my child, she insensibly learned to consider me as a father. By the instruction of a good dame she was early pious, and therefore readily joined in devotion, wherever she found it, and religion, I presume, favours neither of sorcery nor seduction.—As to foreign languages, I taught her only one; I grieved to see
her

her education neglected, and wished to remedy the defect all in my power.—And now to speak of Cuthbert, as by that name you know him.—His design at the castle was without my knowledge, though not without my wishes, and I judge those wishes influenced him to act as he did. I considered the orphan in danger, and he, with the warmth of youth, resolved to snatch her from it, though she was unknown, for he had then never even seen her.—As to his bodily strength or skill, for the first he possesses a good constitution, which, unvitiated by luxury, and uncorrupted by art, is the gift of God to man; of his skill in music I know nothing, for I never even heard him play.”

“ You confess you are acquainted
with

with this Cuthbert, then?" said one of the lord De Launcy's council.

"I do; he came to England from the lady Abbess of the convent of St. Mary's, Bremen, to bring me news of a paper we had long sought, as necessary to authenticate Margaret's birth-right."

"You also confess," said the council, "you employed this same Cuthbert to convey away Margaret Fitzwalter?"

"No,—he executed my wishes unknown to me," answered Austin.—
 "By her elopement she was saved from the violence of Richard De Launcy, who that same night meant to have borne her away, to which intention both his men Gilbert and Thomas were accessory."

"It is not the guilt of others, friar,
 that

that is now the question, but to exculpate your own," said one of the lawyers.

"Where now," interrupted the king, "is Margaret Fitzwalter; can the friar produce her?"

"My liege, I have heard no news of her since her departure from England, though I have expected it daily.—Unless the sea has been as merciless to her, as her oppressors here, she is, long ere this, with the virtuous guardian of her youth, the venerable Alice, under the protection of the Abbess of St. Mary's, a woman dignified by her rank, but more by her sufferings and virtue: the richest heiress in Germany, and niece to his holiness the Pope.—There, my liege, my *seduction* and *sorcery* placed her."

De Launcy was astonished and confounded, when he heard Margaret was so highly protected—but recovering himself he said,—“ Pardon, my liege ; but is the paternal roof to be violated by midnight intruders ? and the peace of families broken on, by the deep-laid designs of meddling priests, whom interest, or a love of disturbance may actuate ? ”

“ Undoubtedly not,” replied Henry ; but I now think, to have comprehended this business aright, it would have been requisite to have began the investigation, by the friar’s reasons for his extraordinary conduct. He confesses, if not having himself stolen Margaret, at least of having employed the person who did so, and that he was principally concerned in placing her where she

now

now is. The propriety of the situation cannot be objected to, nor does it appear that he is guilty of either sorcery or seduction, but simply of stealing, or rather causing this maid to be stolen; you will therefore deliberate on the subject, and give me your opinion."

The judges concurred in the king's determination, and the friar was acquitted of all, but being concerned in the elopement of Margaret; but that was a crime of sufficient magnitude in a priest to strike at his life.

"Pronounce what sentence you think most fitting," said the king, "but remember mercy. The friar has undoubtedly acted wrong, but his head, rather than his heart, I think in fault."

"I thank you, my gracious liege, and crave to be heard once more, before

the sentence is pronounced. A man, I believe, after he is convicted, cannot give his evidence, and, mine is most necessary in the cause depending, respecting the birth-right of Margaret Fitzwalter; could your highness therefore, of your goodness, suffer it to be protracted——”

“It is against the rule,” answered one of the counsellors, “it cannot be.”

“I addressed your master,” replied Austin with some haughtiness; “but since it is against the rule, and I cannot, though most informed, be admitted a witness for the orphan Margaret, I will *claim* for her a protector more powerful than myself,—one whose honour I dare not dispute.”

The whole assembly judged he meant a heavenly, rather than an earthly protector;

lector; but he speedily undeceived them: for before any one was aware of his intention, he rushed from the bar to the foot of the throne, and kneeling, laid a sword which was concealed under his garment, at the king's feet. "I *demand* for her," continued he, "should I fall, by this token, the protection of your grace,—*Henry the Seventh is hostage for the debts of the earl of Richmond.*"

"Treason! treason!" exclaimed a number of the spectators, rushing and seizing the friar; but the king himself, commanding silence, said, "Let him loose, give me the sword, that I may observe it closely."

Some of the courtiers presented the sword:—Henry took it in his hand,—
 "God's truth," said he, "but this
 9 sword

sword and I are old acquaintance.—
 Was I not heard?—Let loose the
 friar, as yet I understand not this.—
 Speak, who art thou? for well I know
 thou art not what thou seemest.”

“ In truth I am———simply a poor
 friar, my liege———nothing more.”

“ That,” said the king, “ may be
 true, but what wer’t thou heretofore?”

“ That, if your grace would know,
 must be for your private ear,” answered
 Austin. “ To you, but to no other,
 will I reveal my secret woes.”

“ Shew him to the palace,” said
 Henry, “ give him refreshment; I will
 see him an hour hence in my closet.”

“ My liege,” replied De Launcy,
 his lips quivering with rage, “ the hy-
 pocrite had a sword concealed; who
 knows

knows what his fell mind may devise?
He hath aforetime been mad."

"Hath he!" answered the king—
"then why brought *you* a madman hither? Do as I say: *I* fear not, why should you?"

Austin threw open his garment—
"If you suspect me to be a murderer," said he wildly, "you will judge less truly ere you die, unless it be speedily: but search, I have no weapon concealed, that you can reach.—I have only one, and that is—a dagger in my own heart."

"Indeed, my liege, he is mad," said one of the courtiers.

"Then be ye wise," answered the king," and do as ye are commanded, and on me be the consequence. For
the

the present defer the sentence; break up the court—I will no more to day.”

“ May it please your grace to adjourn the court till to-morrow then?” said one of the judges.

“ At your pleasure,” replied Henry. “ Observe my instructions, and fare ye well.”

So saying, Henry arose and departed. The judges and counsellors regarded each other with astonishment. De Launcy gnashed his teeth in silent anguish, while the officers, obedient to the king's command, conducted Austin to the palace.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.



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